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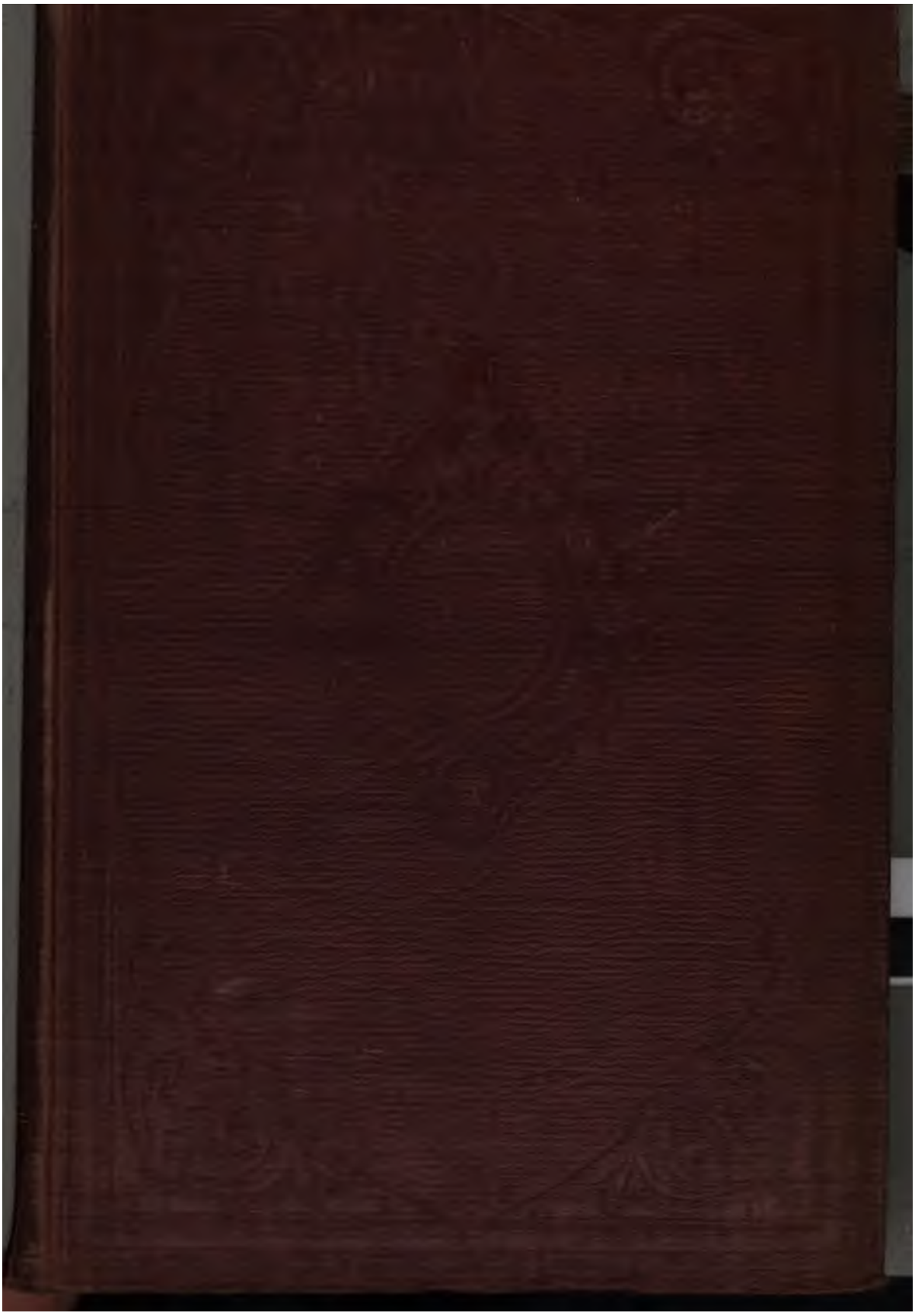

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MEMOIRS OF BÉRANGER.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

IN ONE VOLUME.

LONDON:
HURST & BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1858.

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BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA ·

MY BIOGRAPHY.

Of what importance is it to great poets that the history of their lives should be transmitted to posterity? Their life is entirely involved in the duration of their works: and the traditions and legends with which, in the dearth of positive information, the people surround the cradle or the tomb of their favourite bards, rather add to their renown.

A song-writer, who is the echo—more or less faithful—of his age, cannot indulge in the hope of any such posthumous glory. If his songs peradventure survive himself a few years, the following generation may be unable to comprehend them, unless they have complete information of all the circumstances in

which their author was placed, and of the individual sentiments by which he was more immediately inspired.

The friends who exerted all their influence in endeavouring to persuade me to compose and bequeath to the world these personal memoirs, have frequently addressed me in the manner I have stated: and my answer, for a long time, has invariably been, "Of what value is the history of a man who has occupied no distinguished position in an age when so many have been persuaded of their own importance?" But they uniformly replied, "Your biography, written by yourself, may become the most faithful commentary of your songs."

My indisposition to the task was at last overcome by their persuasions; and in this biography I consign to posterity a considerable number of personal recollections. It is requisite, however, to warn the reader, that, although the period of my life runs contemporary with the most important events of an epoch which has produced and witnessed so many, I make no pretensions to extend my narrative, and the reflections by which it is accompanied, beyond the sphere which my career, as a song-writer, naturally indicates and confines me to. As my mind was constantly pre-occupied with the interests of my country, above all other objects of consideration, I

have, doubtless, been led to meditate profoundly upon several questions of a general nature. Naturally inclined to view things in their political relations and aspects, I may often have expressed my opinion of enterprises of more or less importance; but in such a delineation of my life as this is intended to be, I must confine myself as strictly as possible to facts that have reference to myself alone—facts it may be of but little consequence, and no doubt often very common-place. As regards that share of personal influence I have exercised in active political life, I must refer to what the historians may be disposed to say of it, should my readers consider it sufficiently interesting to follow its traces in the most recent events of which France has been the theatre.

In perusing these recollections, the reader will observe that my contemplative character has, in most instances, confined me to the *rôle* of a passive spectator. When, at fifty years of age, I was brought within a near view of power, I only bestowed upon it a passing attention, just as in the indigent period of my youth I found amusement in looking on the green cloth, heaped with gold, and observing the varying chances of the game—without, however, envying those who held the cards. There were neither contempt nor prudence on my part in this: I merely obeyed the humour of

the moment. The reflections with which my narrative shall be interspersed, as it proceeds, will be the exact expression of the emotions produced by an existence, from which all my pleasure proceeded. I leave great events and the more important narrations of history to great men. This is merely the story of a song-writer.

If it were in one's power to select the place of his birth, I should certainly have chosen Paris for mine. Even before the date of our great Revolution, Paris was the city of liberty and equality, in which misfortune was at all times alleviated by the greatest manifestations of sympathy. I was born here on the 19th of August, 1780, in the house of my grandfather, Champy, by trade a tailor, in the *Rue Montorgueil*—in which, the house is still standing at the present day.*

Who, knowing that the scene of my birth was in one of the dirtiest and most turbulent streets of Paris, could have imagined that I should so love the woods, the fields, the flowers, and the birds?

My father, who had been for some time the clerk of a provincial notary, came to Paris, and made his *début* in this street, as book-keeper to a grocer.

* Since this was written it has been removed to make room for a *parc aux huitres.—Note by Béranger*

Being desirous of engaging in business, he determined on marriage, when nearly thirty years of age. A young girl, pretty, sprightly, and of a beautiful figure, passed the grocer's door every morning, on her way to the *Magasin de Modes*, where she worked. My father took a fancy to her, solicited her hand in marriage, and obtained the consent of the tailor Champy, who had six other children.

My grandfather bestowed no other dowry on his son-in-law than that which was involved in a useful relationship; of which the latter might have taken advantage.

But he was so far from doing so, that after six months of marriage and prodigal expenditure, the two spouses separated—my father with the intention of proceeding to Belgium, and my mother returning to her parents. The latter resumed her occupation as a *modiste;* and scarcely regretted the absence of a husband, for whom, gay, kind, and of an agreeable exterior, as he was, she had never experienced much affection. My birth had almost cost my mother's life—the use of instruments having been necessary, in order to facilitate my entrance into this world, from which I should certainly prefer to depart with less ceremony. In later times, when I suffered from such a want of self-confidence as led me to apprehend difficulties even in the most trifling matters, I used

to remark, that nothing had been easy to me, not even the circumstances of my birth.

I was entrusted to the care of a nurse in the neighbourhood of Auxerre, with whom I remained three or four years; during which time no one appears to have been at all anxious to know whether I was well or ill. The truth is, I was getting on remarkably well.

Although my nurse had lost her milk, as we were afterwards informed, and, according to the custom of Burgundy, I was frequently fed on bread dipped in wine, instead of *bouillie*, she did not on that account bring me up with less care or tenderness; and although paid with great irregularity, it was, nevertheless, with great reluctance that she restored me to my grandfather, in whose care I remained till I was nearly nine years of age. His wife and he had not regarded their own children with much affection; but, true to their character as grand-parents, they did their utmost to spoil me; made my uncles and aunts my very humble servants; and it was by no means their fault if I did not then acquire the taste for an elegant and *recherché* appearance. As I was frequently attacked by dangerous maladies, and subject from the earliest period of childhood to the most violent headaches, I was older than usual when I was first sent to a school,

which was situated exactly opposite our house in the *impasse* (blind-alley) *de la Bouteille.* I do not believe I attended more than twenty times—so cunning and inventive was I in discovering pretexts for the avoidance of the painful drudgery. My good grandparents imposed this duty upon me with reluctance, although they had themselves a taste for reading. I remember my grandmother carefully perusing the romances of Prevôt, and the works of Voltaire; and my grandfather commenting aloud on the work of Raynal, which at that time enjoyed great popularity. I may since have doubted whether my kind grandmother understood much of what she read, passionately addicted as she was to her books. She was constantly quoting M. de Voltaire; which, however did not lead her to neglect to make me join, on the occurrence of the sacred ceremonies of the *Fête-Dieu,* in the celebration of the Holy Sacrament.

My inclination for school was never very great; my disposition rather led me to remain noiselessly in a corner, to cut paper figures, or to make little baskets of cherry-stones, skilfully hollowed out and delicately carved; masterpieces of art, which kept me employed whole days, and excited the admiration of all my relations.

My mother had, by this time, left her own family,

and was now residing alone. I was in the habit of going occasionally to spend a week or a fortnight with her near the Temple, where her dwelling was situated. These visits made me acquainted with modes of life, which presented a strange contrast to that which I had in the *Rue Montorgueil.* She also frequently took me with her to the theatres on the *boulevard,* to some balls, and on pleasure excursions into the country.

I listened much, and spoke little. I learned many things, but I did not learn to read.

My father, who was still separated from my mother, was now residing in Anjou, and I had only seen him once or twice on his occasional journeys to Paris. In the beginning of the year 1789, he returned to it, and it was then determined that I should be sent to school in the faubourg St. Antoine, to which I was soon after taken, and from the roof of which I witnessed the capture of the Bastille. That memorable event may be said to have embraced almost all the instruction I ever received there; for, to the best of my recollection, I was never taught either reading or writing. I had, however, already perused the *Henriade,* with notes and various readings, and a translation of the *Jerusalem,* by Mirabaud. These works were the gift of an uncle, who, like my grandfather, followed the business of a tailor; and who was anxious

to inspire me with a taste for books. If it be asked, how I had learned to read, I am unable to reply.

The short time that I passed in this school, impressed on my memory the recollection of two events, besides the capture of the Bastille, the circumstances of which I can now retrace with pleasure.

An old man, who came to see his grandson, was a frequent visitor. This youth, being the oldest pupil of the school, enjoyed the privilege of a corner of the garden to himself; and this little plot was adorned with a green arbour—in the shade of which the old man was accustomed to sit with great satisfaction. I frequently made my way through the capucines and sweet-scented peas, in order to look upon this venerable octogenarian: whose name I had heard over and over again from my schoolfellows. It was Favart, the founder of the Opera Comique, and author of several very successful plays, such as *Annette et Lubin*, *La Chercheuse d'Esprit*, and *Les Trois Sultanes*. So pleasing is this recollection to me, that even at the present day I am anxious to discover the circumstances or the impressions which led me, ignorant and uninstructed as I was, to remain so long gazing with curious interest on that old poet, whose talent and reputation I was quite unable to appreciate.

Could it be the instinct of my future destiny which

attracted me to this author of so many of the lyrics generally sung throughout the country—to this Favart who, when speaking of his dramatic journeys in the train of camps and armies, used to say—"The Maréchal de Saxe had appointed me the song-writer of the army."

My second recollection is of a very different nature. Among the pupils were several children of Grammont, a tragic actor of the Theatre Français. I can still see the youngest dressed in a red tunic—one of the discarded heroic garments of his father. With what delight I would listen to him, when he declaimed before us the part of *Joas*, which he had been already taught to play! I had formed an intimate friendship with this pupil, because he was of a mild and tranquil character—which harmonized with my own dreamy listlessness. With the elder Grammont, a boy of at least fifteen years of age, my relations were not so agreeable. I regarded him with extreme terror, in consequence of the bad treatment which he was never weary of inflicting upon me. Fortunately, our encounters were very rare—he belonged to the class of big boys: I was one of the little. I afterwards conceived some suspicion as to the cause of the aversion with which he regarded me.

I was favoured with the protection of a relative of my grandfather, who had long known our school-

master, the Abbé ——. In the hope of pleasing my cousin, the subordinates of the school pampered and indulged me; and thanks to my frequent headaches, I was often allowed to absent myself from class. A favour of this description naturally rendered me an object of envy; and on the day of an important ceremony, Grammont found an opportunity of indulging his hatred. It was the occasion on which prizes were distributed to the pupils; I had not the slightest claim to any myself, and I saw them conferred on younger fellow pupils without a single feeling of envy or regret. I was quite satisfied to be passed over: when—had I not what I must call the remarkable misfortune to be presented with the *croix de sagesse*; the eternal lot of college boobies?—to be candid, I had certainly some right to it, as I was neither given to play, nor insubordinate, nor noisy.

But the pupils did not fail to shout *haro sur le baudet!* This, however, did not prevent my being decorated with the cursed cross. But if any feeling of pride was conceived on this account, it was of short continuance. That very day, when the pupils of all ages who had not yet been removed by their relatives for the vacation, were assembled in the play-ground, I was standing at the railing which separated us from the street, eying the stalls of cakes and fruit which were stationed there to tempt

the meagre purses of the scholars. The small sums which relations allow to be distributed to their children under the name of *semaine*, or weekly money, were rapidly exchanged for such sweet dainties. Alas! my only pleasure was to be a witness of the enjoyment of others—for I had no *semaine*. An enormous apple, with its glowing vermillion coat, particularly excited my appetite. Child-like, I was devouring it with my eyes, when a rude voice suddenly exclaimed, close to my ear, "Take the apple! take it! or I shall thrash you." It was not the old serpent which tempted our first parents, but the terrible Grammont. His iron hand was pressing me against the railing. What feelings took possession of my innocent and candid spirit! I scarcely dared to commit the act; but terror, in conjunction with my eager appetite, triumphed so completely, that I yielded to the injunctions of my enemy; and, forgetting the respect due to my new decoration, I tremblingly put forth my hand, and seized the fatal apple. I had no sooner committed the crime than Grammont seizes me by the collar, raises the cry of thief, and holds forth the evidence of my guilt before the assembled school. What a scandal! The holder of the prize for good conduct to have been betrayed into the commission of so heinous a fault! I was taken into the presence of the masters; but so great was my

agitation, that I neither heard nor understood the sentence that was passed upon me. Doubtless, the bad reputation of the accuser, who was detested both by pupils and by masters, and some kind testimonies in my favour, enlightened the conscience of the judges.

It is certain, however, that I was obliged to give up the cross— which Grammont, at the first moment, had snatched from my breast. I cannot say whether or not it is to this scene, which cost me many tears, that I must attribute my aversion, since that period, to apples, and the slight estimation in which I hold crosses as emblems of merit.

How often have I, since that time, laughed, in recalling to mind this adventure of childhood. As to Grammont, it were happy for him if he had confined himself to such practical frolics.

I was informed four years later, that having become, along with his father, one of the chiefs of the revolutionary army, which covered with blood and ruins the departments of the west, father and son had committed so many atrocities, that the Committee of Public Safety, in order to make an example, gave them up to the guillotine, which constantly followed the army along with the baggage.

I heard of this death with terror: I had already experienced the effect which the sight of blood, shed

by the hand of a murderer, had produced upon me. In the month of October, 1789, on a holiday with which we had been favoured, as I was crossing the street with one of my aunts, we suddenly found ourselves in the midst of a crowd of men and women of the most repulsive and alarming aspect. They were carrying, on the points of long pikes, the heads of the *gardes du corps*, who had been massacred at Versailles. This spectacle inspired me with such horror that, when I now think of it, I seem to behold, in imagination, one of those blood-stained heads that passed quite close to me. I also regarded it as one of the greatest blessings of heaven, that I was removed from Paris during the Reign of Terror.

My father, who had become a notary at Durtal, very soon wearied of paying my moderate school-charges, and sent me to Peronne—a town in the neighbourhood of which he was born, in a village inn—a circumstance which did not prevent him making great pretensions to nobility. These pretensions he founded on certain family traditions; which, in his opinion justified him in conferring on me, in the register of my birth, the feudal particle, which he always assumed himself; and to which my mother, daughter of a tailor as she was, attached no less importance than he did. In my own justification, I must state, that this was a mania of the heads of our

family. My grandfather had made the same pretensions—although he had been obliged by the state of abandonment in which he was left (his father having gone, under the name of Béranger de Formentel, to contract a second marriage in England), to descend to the condition of a publican. These aristocratic ideas and pretensions are still very common in France. I have known a small shopkeeper of Picardy who, with great assurance, used to maintain that he was allied to the house of Bourbon. That, at least, was worth the cost of self-delusion!

For my part, it was not until I had seen some bad verses, written in my manner, which appeared in an almanack, and were attributed to a M. Bérenger, author of the *Soirées Provençales*, that I determined, according to the advice of Arnault, to make use of the *de*, and to place the initials of my baptismal names before my surname. In this way I showed that there was a distinct difference between my signature and that of several others of the name of Bérenger, who wrote at this period; and one of whom, I understand, had composed some verses on the birth of the King of Rome, which were attributed to me in my turn. I did not protest on this occasion; but I wrote several letters to the *Quotidienne*, in favour of the other Bérenger; whom I should certainly have desired to be declared innocent of my unfortunate rhymes. The

Quotidienne paid no regard to my testimony; and the result was, the introduction of an additional particle into literature. On the occasion of the Restoration, some friends wished that I should suppress it; but I had sufficient confidence in the strength of my own principles to avoid giving evidence of them in so childish a manner. My father left me, as my only inheritance, a heraldic genealogy—to the support of which the only things necessary were, authoritative papers, historical accuracy, and moral probability.

But let us now return to my journey into Picardy. It was to one of his sisters, a widow, who had no children of her own, that my father, without having given her any previous notice of my approach, sent me off by the diligence. I see myself arriving, under the direction of an old female cousin, at the little inn of the *Epée Royale*, which was kept by my aunt in one of the faubourgs of Peronne, and which constituted her whole possessions. I do not know her; she receives me with hesitation, reads my father's letter, commending me to her care, and then addressing the cousin, says—"It is impossible for me to take charge of him." This moment it still dwells vividly in my recollection. My grandfather, having been seized with paralysis, had retired with an insufficient income, and could not provide for me. My father rejected the burden of my support; and my

mother was totally regardless of me. I was no more than nine years and a half old; but I felt that I was repelled by all. What was to become of me? Such scenes quickly develop reason, and bring it to maturity, even in those who are born with but the smallest germ of it.

In the course of years, as I increased in growth, I became very plain in appearance; but I had been a beautiful child, and I have often said to myself, that I ought to bless Providence for it. This beauty, which is particular to the first age of our life, might exercise a great influence on its whole duration, by the smiles of love and happiness with which it surrounds us, at a period when we stand so much in need of support and sympathy. I do not at all wish to diminish the meritorious nature of my aunt's conduct; but as I see her in memory, she first throws a side-long, hesitating glance upon me. Her hesitation lasts but for a moment; her heart is touched; and then, moved and melted by my solitary and abandoned fate, she presses me in her arms, and, while the tears glisten in her eyes, says, "Poor deserted child! I will be your mother!" Never was a promise more faithfully and tenderly kept!

I had to lament, some time ago, the loss of this excellent woman, who died at the age of eighty-six years, after having dictated her epitaph—which was to

this effect, "She never was a mother, and yet she has left children who weep for her." Her nephew, the poet, could have found nothing better than this to say; but he may still be permitted to insert in this place the eulogium of her who was, in every respect, his true mother. Endowed by nature with a superior mind, she had supplied the defects of her education by serious and select reading. Inspired with enthusiasm for all that was great, even in the last years of her life, she continued to dwell with interest on the announcement of new discoveries, the progress of industry, and even the embellishment of the city. As she was capable of the most sanguine exaltation of temperament, the Revolution had influence enough to make her as ardent a republican as was consistent with her humane disposition; and she was always able to associate with her patriotism as a Frenchwoman, those religious sentiments for which a feeling soul is often more indebted to its own inherent nature than to early education. Such was the poor *aubergiste*, who was burdened with the care and responsibility of the second period of my childhood. Telemachus, Racine, and the dramatic works of Voltaire, composed her whole library, and with these she succeeded in teaching me to read; for, although I already knew almost by heart two epic poems, I could read only by eye, and was incapable

of connecting and pronouncing even two syllables aloud—having never been instructed in the value of sounds in their union and harmony. At length, an old schoolmaster taught me to write and to calculate with greater precision than I had been able to teach myself. At this point my studies were brought to an end; my aunt had not the means to procure for me a more complete and brilliant course; and, besides, the college of Peronne was now closed. I had, in particular, a very great taste for drawing, which she was anxious I should cultivate; but to this, also, the amount of requisite outlay presented an insuperable obstacle. Fortunately, my moral education was not interfered with by any similar cause, for which I am indebted to the lessons on all subjects that I received from my aunt; lessons which she carefully adapted to my age, and to the peculiar character of my intelligence, the development of which was very rapid, until I had reached the age of twelve. The mistress even occasionally considered it necessary to have recourse to the opinion of her pupil. Thus, for nearly fifty years, I have been in the habit of giving counsel to others. It appears, therefore, that I was destined to this foolish business—which is no more advantageous to those who adopt it than to those on whose behalf it is exercised. I shall, probably, be asked if this precocious development of reason pre-

vented myself from frequently going astray. Alas! no; but it enabled me to preserve the memory of my slightest faults, and it is on that account that I am happy to recall to-day without shame the lessons of my instructress.

I shall now relate an incident, which will give an idea of the method she so successfully employed to inculcate her principles.

During the Reign of Terror, several of her friends, inhabiting a neighbouring village, were arrested in the middle of the night, and conducted to Peronne, there to be incarcerated. In passing before our inn, they were permitted to speak to my aunt. The noise of this visit had not awoke me; and in the morning, without informing me of the arrests that had been made, she took me with her to the town, and I remarked with astonishment that she proceeded immediately in the direction of the prison. When she was about to knock at the wicket, she said to me, "My child, we are going to see some worthy people, good citizens, who have been deprived of their liberty, in consequence of a base and calumnious accusation. I wish to show you the persecutions to which virtue is exposed in times of political agitation."

Such lessons, communicated in so impressive and practical a manner, remain profoundly impressed on a young mind.

Another lesson was taught me, of a totally different nature. As long as the churches remained open, my aunt either conducted or sent me punctually to Divine service. She even made me assist in the service of the mass a priest with whom she was acquainted; and on whom since then, Brother Jean des Entomeures has often led me to think. It was necessary, of course, to learn the Latin of the service; but, notwithstanding my excellent memory, I was never able to learn Latin by heart. The consequence was that, at my first communion, the curé was obliged, in contempt of the canons, to allow me to say my prayers in French.

To return to my apprenticeship as a child of the choir, I fulfilled my duties so imperfectly—I so bungled and confounded the responses—I handled the cruets so awkwardly, that the abbé, who, however, ought not to inspect them too narrowly, perceiving one day that there did not remain a sufficient quantity of wine for the consecration, discharged an epithet at me, which was anything but sacramental—hastily finished the mass, and made his way to the sacristy—vowing that he would never again admit me to the honour of serving the altar. I had no desire to return to it I took much greater pleasure in listening to political conversation. It is unnecessary to relate all the circumstances calculated to explain the manner in which,

young as I was, I became so interested in the events of our great revolution, and how my patriotism was exalted to so lofty a pitch.

Into what a state of anxiety my aunt and I were thrown by the invasion of the army of the Coalition! the advanced guards of which had penetrated beyond Cambrai. Seated, in the evening, at the door of the inn, we listened to the thunder of the cannon, during the siege of Valenciennes, about sixteen leagues from Peronne, which was attacked by the English and Austrians. Every day my horror of the foreigner increased more and more. With what joy, therefore, I listened, when the victories of the republic were proclaimed; and when the cannon announced the recapture of Toulon, I was on the ramparts, and my heart beat so violently at each discharge, that I was under the necessity of sitting down on the grass, in order to recover my breath.

In the present day, when patriotism slumbers in France, these emotions of a child may appear strange. The world will not be less surprised when I state that, at sixty years of age, I still preserve this patriotic exaltation; and that it requires all that love of humanity and reason, enlightened by experience, which I may possess, to prevent me addressing to rival nations the same maledictions, of which I was so prodigal in the period of my youth.

This sentiment so animated—animated so much the more, possibly, because in the world I had early learned to concentrate it in my own mind—has had, like all my other sentiments, a very great influence even on my literary judgments. My friends have often been astonished that my appreciation of Voltaire was so limited, notwithstanding my admiration of his character as a reformer, and of the wonderful fertility of his powerful genius. This kind of coldness in the appreciation of a portion of his works soon became common in France, and dates from the epoch when, still young, I became aware of his unjust preference for foreigners. Indeed, I almost regarded him with hatred when, at a later period, I read the poem in which he outrages Joan of Arc; a true patriotic divinity—who, from the days of infancy, has been the object of my sincere veneration. I should not have dared to say this to-day if I had ever insulted Napoleon, dying in captivity with the English.

I hope I may be pardoned for dwelling so much on this patriotic love of country, which was the great, I might almost say, the only passion of my life. With the exception of the fevers and headaches, which now became more and more painful, my health did not suffer from any other circumstance at Peronne, with the exception of one which might have put an end to every

other malady. In the month of May, 1792, I am standing on the threshold of the door, at the termination of a storm; a thunder-bolt falls, bursts, and throws me to the ground, completely suffocated. A thick smoke fills the house; the interior is laid waste; and crevices are opened in the roof by the lightning. My aunt, concerned only about me, when she sees me extended without life, raises me up, carries me in her arms, and exposes me to the air and rain. In the midst of the crowd that has collected, she feels my pulse, lays her hand upon my heart, looks in vain for some signs of existence, and exclaims, "He is dead!" I could hear her long before I could make any movement or utter a single word, in order to reassure her. At length, being insensibly recalled to myself, after having responded to her joyful caresses, I gave utterance to some reflection of an infant reasoner, for which she had very frequently reproached me, always adding the remark, "I clearly perceive that you will never be devout." I have said that she was sincerely religious. On the indications of a storm she sprinkled the house with holy-water, and she used, to say, "This is to preserve us from the thunder." When I was restored to life, and stretched upon the bed of a neighbour, I got them to relate to me what had happened, and then immediately exclaimed, "Well, and what was the use of your holy water?"

It was long before I recovered from the terrible shock I had received; and my sight, which until then had been very good, appeared to have suffered to such a degree, that it was altogether out of the question to realize the design which had been formed of placing me as apprentice with a clockmaker: a trade which had many attractions to me, and for which my extreme dexterity rendered me suitable. Nevertheless, it was necessary that I should adopt some trade; an opinion in which I was supported by a well-known passage of Rousseau.*

My aunt also was quite aware that if I confined myself to assisting her in the management of her inn, my prospects for the future would by no means be assured thereby. She perceived, moreover, that my vanity was wounded, when circumstances rendered it necessary that I should wait at table, or go to the stable, and she remarked to herself that my feeble constitution was not adapted to every kind of labour. My first introduction to business was as a jeweller; but the master with whom I served was a poor man, who taught me only to execute a little work in copper; making me spend the greater part of my time in listening to the story of his amours. I, therefore, abandoned his workshop, and entered

* I wish Emilius to have a profession, &c., &c.—Rousseau,—*Emile.—Note by Béranger.*

the office of a notary, who had become *juge de paix*. This magistrate was a friend of my aunt, who pleased him by her wit and intelligence. He showed me many marks of kindness, and the recollection of him must ever remain one of the most delightful which I have to record of the days of my youth.

M. Ballue de Bellenglise, a zealous disciple of Rousseau, and an enthusiastic partisan of the Revolution, had been called to the Legislative Assembly. When he returned to Peronne, after the term of his mission had expired, he founded certain gratuitous primary schools on a plan which may, probably, be considered worthy of serious consideration.

M. de Bellenglise was more anxious to form men than to educate *savants;* and his desire and object were, that the pupils should carry on the work of their own discipline. The school was supposed to form a little community. The pupils elected, from among themselves, judges, members of districts, a mayor, municipal officers, a justice of peace. These officials were all required to exercise their functions within a sphere of authority adapted to the requirements and interests of an association of young imps, the oldest of whom might, probably, be about fifteen. The system included also an armed force, composed of the whole body of the pupils, who were divided into chasseurs, grenadiers, and artillery;

and who also elected their own officers. In our promenades we carried our lances and sabres, and were attended by an ammunition waggon and a small piece of cannon—which was dragged after us, and in the manœuvring of which we were instructed. If our supply of muskets fell short, it was because a sufficient number had not been fabricated to provide for the twelve armies by which the republic was defended.

We had also a club—the meetings of which attracted a number of the people of Peronne of all ages. In respect to our studies, although our founder was a learned Latinist, Latin was completely banished from the institution; and, notwithstanding his remonstrances, we paid but little attention to the instructions of an old priest who taught us grammar, and for whom this establishment provided, during the continuance of the revolutionary crisis, a safe and desirable refuge. The interests of the republic had far greater attractions for us than lessons in language; and as every member of my family sung, it was then, doubtless, that the gift of song was awakened in me. I might also have acquired the power of public speaking, for I was invariably appointed the president of our club, and the duty was imposed on me of pronouncing addresses to the members of Convention, who came to Peronne. Besides, in all the national

ceremonies, we had our appointed place. On such occasions I usually delivered an oration of my own composition; and I may add that, in times of more than ordinary importance, I was appointed to draw up addresses to the Convention and to Maximilian Robespierre.

The intrusion of these children into the sphere of high politics, and the little attention generally bestowed on study, was a double inconvenience, the result of the revolutionary effervescence. M. de Bellenglise always gave it his strenuous opposition; but his remonstrances were to no purpose. On the whole, however, it has always been my opinion, that the system of education he had conceived was, fundamentally, one which was in every way adapted to produce good citizens, in a country where popular election ought to be the only pivot of power.

Our Lycurgus had also extended his system to the education of young girls—adapting it of course to the requirements of their sex.

The inculcation of the forms and principles of that society, in which they must afterwards occupy a place, into the minds of children is calculated to give the value, which a duration of several centuries usually confers, to institutions that have but more or less recently been developed from the principles which are necessarily realized in such forms. It is equivalent to

the production of a precocious experience in the minds of children who have come into the world under a new political *régime*, and to their initiation betimes, not only in the practice, but also in the curious study of principles which are not yet perfectly adapted to the wants of society. What important purpose do our great establishments for the instruction of youth serve, except to produce a few *savants* and a considerable number of ordinary scholars. Are men formed in these institutions to take their part in the business of life? As for citizens, there is no question of them.

The establishment founded by M. de Bellenglise had only a short existence. An outcry was raised against it, and it was quickly abandoned. There is no greater misery than that of the man of superior talents and comprehensive views, who is condemned to live in a paltry town, especially if it has been the scene of his birth. It is, indeed, painful to find that no one is capable of understanding or sympathizing with his opinions; but that is the least of his discomforts.—The stupidity and jealousy of his neighbours, who regard him with the greatest animosity, spare no exertions to raise up enemies against him. M. de Bellenglise had a sufficiently numerous host of them; but he appeared not to be conscious of the fact.

This man was a republican Fénélon. I have never been able to represent to myself the author of Telemachus under any other figure, or with any other tone of voice, than the figure and the voice of this venerable friend of my childhood. His simple appearance and grave aspect were peculiarly his own. I still recollect his fine eyes, his fair complexion, and his smiling mouth. I see his wide brown *lévite*, with a single row of buttons, descending to his feet, and his large, round hat. How imposing he appeared to me! Two little dogs were the usual companions of his solitary walks; and when the distance he had traversed was too great for them, he carried them in turn in his arms. In his own dwelling, in the midst of a profusion of flowers, a charming collection of birds delighted and soothed him by their songs, which interrupted neither his labours nor his meditations. M. de Bellenglise was initiated in the secrets of all the sciences. He was deeply sensible to the finer emotions produced by the contemplation of works of art. He played comedy with great success; but his most successful efforts were in the delineations of the drama—a species of theatrical representation which, at that time, was quite new. He also suggested the idea that we should learn certain parts: to our repetitions of which he listened with the greatest pleasure. His elocu-

tion, although brief and pointed, was full of grace. His moral nature was mild and gentle—not only pervading and softening his own character, but extending his influence over others. He did not require to say, " Let these little ones come to me," in order that we should eagerly follow in his footsteps.

My relatives had often told me that, in the expression of his affection for me, he had predicted that I should become celebrated on some future day. The little renown that I have obtained he never knew; for he died at Amiens, where he filled the office of President of the Criminal Court of the department of the Somme. The exercise of these high functions was painful to him in the extreme; and when his duty compelled him to condemn an unhappy wretch, who had avenged an unjust, but formally legal spoliation of his property, by an act of incendiarism, he addressed the individual who had done wrong under the sanction of the law, in the open court, in terms of reprobation so pointed and energetic, that the latter, notwithstanding the influence of his wealth, was obliged to remove from the department. M. de Bellenglise was opposed to the punishment of death; and, on each visit of the First Consul to Amiens, he never missed an opportunity of using his utmost exertions in attempting to satisfy him of its injustice and inutility. Excellent

man! True philosopher!—benevolent and charitable—may thy memory be blessed!

It was through the influence of M. de Bellenglise that I obtained employment in the printing office, which, with the aid of that gentleman, the bookseller Laisnez had just established at Peronne. I continued in this situation nearly two years, devoting myself with great diligence to the labours of typography—an occupation for which I had considerable taste. I did not, however, yet succeed in attaining orthographical correctness. Notwithstanding the attentions of the son of M. Laisnez, who, although a little older than myself, had contracted a warm friendship with me, and was desirous of instructing me in the principles of language—I never engaged in study but with extreme reluctance. The only branch in which his efforts were rewarded with success was the art of versification, in the rules of which I was initiated by him. I will not say that his instruction evoked the taste for this art in me, for I had long possessed it. At twelve years of age, when I was quite incapable of divining that verses were regulated by any fixed system of measure, I wrote several lines of rhyme, both good and bad; but all of the same length, as I had drawn for my direction two pencil lines, from the top to the bottom of the paper. I was persuaded I had thus composed verses quite as regular

as those of Racine. A few verses of Fontaine, however, led me to suspect that much might be said in opposition to my method.

My aunt had, in the meantime, contracted a second marriage with a M. Bouvet, a man of education, wit, and perhaps genius, but of a *bizarre* humour, which, tending almost to folly, gave me a key to the character of Rousseau, whose ideas he appeared to possess, and whose eloquence his language sometimes simulated. He also endeavoured, but without success, to teach me French. Indeed, he was less successful than any other in obtaining ascendancy over me; for, having already had some practice in judging the characters of those by whom I was surrounded, it did not escape my observation that he made my aunt miserable; a result of the union which I had foreseen and predicted. I had used my utmost exertions to prevent this marriage; and the poor woman often said, "I ought to have listened to you."

While my aunt was directing my education by republican maxims, in a town preserved by André Dumont* from the murders which, at the distance

* Few of the Conventionalists, when engaged in their provincial missions, have uttered more furious declamations than André Dumont. By that means he inspired an amount of confidence, which he knew how

of a few leagues, filled Arras—where the ferocious Lebon was all-powerful—with blood, my father was living in Brittany, where he occupied the post of intendant to the Countess of Bourmont, whose son is now a marshal. He had been arrested as a federalist; and, under the name of Béranger de Mersix, he was one of the hundred and thirty-two *Nanteses*. My relatives did not inform me of his arrest, and the sufferings he had experienced, until the moment of his deliverance, which was obtained by a judgment after the 9th Thermidor.

When he came to visit us in 1795, he was not a little scandalized by my opinions, so much in opposition to his own—for he was a devoted royalist. He therefore attempted my conversion, in which, in consequence of my youth, he did not imagine there would be much difficulty; but he soon found out

to turn to the advantage and safety of his department. Many arrests were made at Amiens, which were magnified by rumour; but only one or two imprudent individuals were actually victims sacrificed for the safety of all. I have always been surprised at the small amount of gratitude with which his fellow citizens were inspired by this man, whose humanity was so courageously manifested in opposition to the cruelty of many of his colleagues. I have seen him publicly repudiate absurd denunciations, and send the denunciators to prison. I did not then know all the risks that he ran in acting in this manner.—*Note by Béranger.*

that he had to do with a little caviller, who would yield neither to his discourses nor caresses. He took great offence at this; and had, in my presence, a conversation with my aunt, which I cannot forget, and she has often laughed since in reminding me of it. "Sister," said he, "this child is infected with Jacobinism." "Rather say, nourished with republicanism, dear brother. In this part of the country, Jacobinism has been merely a word." "Jacobin or republican is all one to me, and this child has imbibed the essence of the most pernicious doctrines." "They are mine, and those of the best citizens." "How could you, a religious woman as you are, be so inconsiderate as to have his first communion administered by a perjured priest?" "Was it better to wait until there was neither priest nor church, as was the case soon after." "Without doubt, in the interest of religion, which must revive on the restoration of Royalty." "I am pleased, brother, to hear you talk of religion—you who have not a shadow of faith." "Sister, we aristocrats must defend the altar and the throne. For my services in their cause I have for more than a year been dragged from prison to prison, and, but for the protection of heaven, I had almost been led to the scaffold." "Rather say that your vanity has led you to associate yourself with people, who think no more of you on

that account. But let us leave opinions, which I would have perfectly free, and return to your son." "Well, what do you wish me to do with him now?" "Just what you have done until this moment. When you saw him yesterday, calmly presiding over his club, and heard him speak in ardent and touching language of his native country, and when his words were received with applause, your eyes filled with tears." "I do not deny his intelligence, sister; but myself a devoted royalist, how can I think without dread of the object to which his talents may be devoted?" "He will employ them in the service of the republic." "My God! you will not, then, listen to reason. Your republic has not six months to live; I have already told you so; our lawful sovereign will soon be restored. M. le Comte de Clermont Gallerande, one of those who, in Paris, are making preparations for his return, assured me of this only a few days ago; and it is also the opinion of the young Comte de Bourmont, who is fighting for him in Brittany. In six months, I tell you, we shall all be at the feet of Louis XVIII." "And who is Louis XVIII.?" "He is your king and mine, sister; king of France and Navarre since the death of Louis XVII. Do you not know that this young and unfortunate prince has but recently expired in the Temple, the victim of the most odious treatment?"

"Oh, do not speak to me about it; I have already groaned over the sad fate of that poor child; but in what way can his death affect his uncle, and particularly your son?" "In this way: on the return of the Bourbons, I hope to obtain the admission of my son among the pages of his majesty." "Surely, brother, you are out of your mind. If we had the misfortune again to behold this family, which has armed all Europe against France, do you think that you would be favoured with the slightest notice by the least of their princes?" "Assuredly; I shall present the proofs of my nobility." "Come! still at your idle fancies. Do not forget that you were born in a village inn, and that our good mother was only a servant, but not the less on that account a woman of good sense. The worthy woman, it is true, also allowed that you and your father must have noble blood in your veins. My husband, she used to say, did no work with his ten fingers, and got drunk on wine at the inn, like a good country gentleman,—and as for my son, he can no more live without debts than a great lord." "Sister, all your jokes will not prevent my son, the head of the family after me, from becoming a page of his majesty." "Your son shall never be a lacquey." "What do you mean by a lacquey? The king's page! Why it is an honour envied by the greatest houses." "That quite re-

assures me on his account." "Sister, when the Bourbons return, I swear to you I shall present my son to our excellent princes." "Take care, then, that he does not sing the *Marseillaise* to them."

It must not be imagined that I have invented this dialogue, which the conversations of my father, at a later period, have vividly recalled a hundred times to my recollection, even to the most trivial expressions.

I was soon obliged to join him in Paris, where, again united to my mother, he had engaged in the operations of the Bourse; for it was necessary to live while expecting the return of the royal dynasty.

I had often dreamt of Paris—a city which no one ever forgets, however young he may have been when he first left it; but when on the point of separating from my aunt, I experienced the greatest agitation. The wise counsels which, while her eyes were suffused with tears, she gave me, caused my tears also to flow; and I did not cease weeping during the whole journey, which, at this time of revolutionary disaster, the diligence accomplished in two days and a half. My foresight, that remarkable power—I had almost said that defect—which had rarely abandoned me, seemed to inspire me, in my fifteenth year, with a presentiment of the vicissitudes I was destined to undergo. I knew that my father, however kind he

was disposed to be, was not a proper guide for me in the difficult path of life; and I felt that it was incumbent on me to assume the part and bearing of a man at a very early age. Now, the idea of becoming what is termed a man rather alarmed me. This may appear extraordinary, but it is not the less true. The following is a remarkable proof of what I now state. The thought of becoming and of appearing a man pre-occupied my mind so painfully that, when I afterwards heard it remarked that by clipping the beard with scissors, instead of shaving it, one never had much of that appendage, I determined not to make use of a razor during my youth, and I still employ scissors to shave myself.

What was my occupation in Paris? Alas! I became, with my father, a very expert and able financier. Although I could not confine myself to the rules taught in educational works, the power of calculation was suddenly developed in a remarkable manner in me. In all problems of this nature it was necessary to devise my own method of procedure; and I succeeded in mental calculation with wonderful rapidity. The misfortune of the times compelled my father to resort to all modes of business. It is known with what difficulty the transactions of commerce were effected in those days, and the disorders into which discount dealings, and the

affairs of the bank, were thrown by the rapid succession of events. In this my father saw a resource in his distress, and a sphere for his activity.

The depreciation of assignats gave an enormous value to money. We borrowed at 2½ per cent, and even at three per cent. by the month, and we still made a profit. Child as I was, this business amused me very much at first—perhaps on account of the precocious intelligence which it gave me an opportunity of displaying, to the great admiration of my father. The amusement I found in it was of very short duration, as any one may easily imagine; and I soon knew enough of the nature of the operations we conducted to regard them with disgust. My father, who was dazzled by the extensive nature of his operations, was neither covetous nor distrustful; and his easy goodness of disposition made him the plaything or victim of the first comer who could assume a sad face, or flatter him. I endeavoured, therefore, to convince him that he was not adapted by nature for such a profession. Nevertheless, I was obliged myself, at the age of seventeen, to manage alone affairs of a similar nature. I had just lost my mother, whom I had scarcely ever seen for more than ten months. It was necessity alone which had renewed relations between her and my father, with whom she had but seldom lived on happy terms. She

had never been willing to bring my sister home from the country, where she was residing with her friends. So far as regards myself, nothing was more excusable than her indifference. Buffon says, that boys generally resemble their mothers. Never did child less resemble its mother than I did mine, both morally and physically. Her wish was to have made me a brilliant fop, as they used to say in those days; but my disposition was averse to it. Her imprudence brought her life to a close before she had completed her thirty-seventh year.

A short time after her death, still a royalist, and as regardless of my remonstrances on the subject of politics as of finance, my father allowed himself to be dragged into the conspiracy of Brothier and of Villeheurnois, which was so singularly baffled by General Malo. Our house obtained money from London, where it has always been found for the purpose of stirring up enemies against France. I, poor little patriot, was obliged to carry this gold to the conspirators, who, in my justification I must say, rather appeared to make use of it for their own particular wants than for the accomplishment of their projects. I must also admit that few royalist conspirators could have been obtained at a more moderate rate. These were satisfied with 200,000 francs.

M. de Bourmont had concealed himself in Paris,

with the intention doubtless, of taking the lead in this Royalist movement, in case the designs of the conspirators were favoured by any decided prospect of success. This man, although still very young, and so effeminate in appearance, that he might have been taken for a female in disguise, was the only individual of the party who appeared to possess much ability. I paid him a visit at his residence in the *Rue des Marais du Temple*, where he had found a safe retreat in the midst of extensive gardens; and I was astonished at his boldness and the skill with which he baffled the researches of the police. I observed no individual of any particular note among the other conspirators; but I made them the subject of some epigrams, which hit their mark with sufficient precision to afford much amusement even to my father.

This conspiracy was discovered, and my father was arrested along with the principals and their accomplices. He was brought up for judgment before a council of war, but the proof of his guilt being insufficient, he was fortunately acquitted.

I was obliged to provide for all his wants during the time of his detention; and so successfully did I launch into speculation, that I turned over, in the course of business, more than two hundred thousand francs. My father was delighted with this proof of my financial abilities, and he predicted that I was

certain one day to be the first banker of France. Considering that his expectation of seeing me in the position of one of the pages of Louis XVIII. was not likely to be fulfilled, this was a great consolation to him.

My father was not the only royalist who sought, in the transactions of the money market, a compensation for their political failures. Certain personages of high extraction were intimately allied to us by the strong ties of self-interest. Some of them, it is true, confined themselves to the modest character of debtors for certain borrowed sums; and in this character they were by no means remarkable for punctuality, many of them even failing to satisfy our claims at all. My father, like M. Jourdain, was not the less proud of having such debtors on his books; and such was the pressure of their wants, that they frequently descended to the position of flatterers, in order to assure themselves the advantage of becoming his parasites. I have even seen some of them assist him in the office of the toilet.

I have already alluded to M. de Clermont-Gallerande. This man appeared to me to be possessed of the greatest dignity of character and deportment. He only employed us as his agents in the money operations of the Bourse—in which, at that time, almost

every person had more or less interest, and was, to some extent, involved. This Count, whom I only saw occasionally, appeared to me the ideal of a man of sense and firmness. He had played some secret part in the days of Vendémiaire, in which the partisans of Royalism had been very generally engaged, and in which Bonaparte had contributed to the triumph of the Convention. When the first wars of Italy were terminated, he proceeded to occupy a *hôtel* in the *Rue Chantereine.* The apartment of M. de Clermont was contiguous to this *hôtel,* and from it I saw Bonaparte for the first time as he was crossing the end of the avenue.

"What a great general he is!" I remarked to the Count.

"Yes, but the Republic will destroy him, if he does not destroy the Republic."

"He will make himself dictator."

"That is the prediction of a schoolboy, young man. In such republics as this of France, it only requires a few sweeps of the broom to prepare the country for its legitimate masters."

"And do you think, M. le Comte, that Bonaparte would be willing to undertake the duty of sweeper?"

He hesitated, as if at a loss what reply to give, and finished the conversation by remarking,

"He is a gentleman; he has been educated amongst men like ourselves,—circumstances producing impressions that cannot be effaced. For the rest, the Directory will not allow him to become too great."

I knew enough of history to perceive that the part once played by Monk was that which M. de Clermont now assigned to the hero of Italy. He was not the only one who had indulged in this delusion during the Consulate.

It ought to be clear to every one that I had been educated in a good school of *right divine*. I must have been very stubborn, however, since I did not become one of their partisans. This conversation recalls another of the same period.

My father requested his royalist friends with whom he had intercourse, to lecture me on my republicanism. He had particular confidence in the Chevalier de la Carterie, a man of an advanced age, who was amused by my light talk. One day when we were engaged in discussion together, he began speaking to me of my *legitimate masters*. Tired out by the constant repetition of this word, I suddenly exclaimed:

"Well, sir, inform me, then, who these people are, in respect to whom even their partisans are so little united"

"Of whom are you speaking to me?" gravely enquired the old chevalier.

"Well, of your Louis XVIII., the Comte of Artois, and his sons."

"Pooh, pooh! These are important personages, indeed, to talk about; they are only a family of usurpers."

"Now you confound me, indeed! What, sir!—those legitimate masters for whom so many nobles, so many Vendeans, are devoting themselves to death, are only a set of usurpers?"

"Real usurpers, my friend; and they are not ignorant of it."

"Enlighten me, I pray you; I am completely perplexed."

"I can quite conceive it. Listen to me, then, and you will see into what an error your royalist friends have led you. Before the time of Louis XIV., and his brother the Duke of Orleans, Anne of Austria had a son, who was no other than the *Man with the Iron Mask*. His rights have been wrongfully transferred to the illegitimate children of that queen."

"But, sir, was the Man with the Iron Mask legitimate?"

"Assuredly, he was truly the son of Louis XIII.; but as she was always suspected by her husband, Anne of Austria considered that the king might be incited by Richelieu to cast doubts on his paternity

in a case where it was rendered doubtful by the infrequency of the relations which subsisted between him and his royal spouse, and she consented to the removal and disappearance of her first-born, on the distinct promise that her conjugal relations with the king should for the future, by some means, be rendered so patent as to admit of no ground for doubting the legitimacy of any children that should be afterwards born. Richelieu, who had feigned a passion for Anne, was not long in discovering, by means of the facilities which his position gave him, the secret amours in which she indulged. When the first-born had thus been disposed of, it was no longer possible for the queen to repair her fault, and she was thus put under the absolute dependance of a favourite. Such was the way, my young friend, in which an illegitimate race became the inheritors of the throne of Henry IV."

Although, at this time, little versed in history, I should, doubtless, have had some objections to bring forward against the more romantic parts of this narrative. However, I refrained from proposing any, and contented myself with the remark that, in order to support the pretensions which such a story appeared to suggest, it would be requisite for the Iron Mask to have left heirs of his person.

"Thank God he has left them," replied M. de Carterie. "Learn then, that being first brought up in Normandy, he was there kept under a surveillance which was by no means strict. Before he was twenty-one years of age, he contracted a clandestine marriage with a young lady of a noble family, and by her had a son, whom the unfortunate man never knew; for from the epoch of this marriage must be dated the rigorous imprisonment which has since rendered him so celebrated. It was then, also, that his wife, for the first time, knew of what distinguished blood and lineage he was, and perceived how necessary it was to conceal from all eyes the child she had by him; dreading least they might treat the son in the same manner as they had treated the father, or even worse. This child, which was brought up and educated with the most particular care, had no knowledge of the rights to which he might lay claim, until he was of an age to keep the secret—which was then communicated to him, with all the vouchers that could be used in evidence of the circumstances I have now related to you. This inheritance of a great name has come down through the eldest of his descendants to the present day."

"And who is the happy mortal who, in the present day, is the possessor of so distinguished an honour?"

"It is a man of about thirty years of age, bearing the name of Vernon, who inhabits a chateau in Bretagne, where many of his faithful subjects have considered it their duty to present themselves to him. He enjoys in that province the respect even of those who know nothing of his royal origin, his mental powers, his education, and his majestic appearance conferring on him so many advantages, of which the common race of men are destitute. During the Reign of Terror he was protected by the revolutionary party, and a tempest has now passed over his head, which ought to deliver him from his most bitter enemies."

"When does he intend, then, to make known and to maintain his rights?"

"Wait, wait, only wait. A man has already made his appearance who seems to be the predestined instrument of his restoration to the throne of his ancestors."

"May it be Bonaparte?"

"Precisely; he is not the man they suppose him to be; but you will know more of him afterwards."

The history of the Iron Mask had so often engaged my attention, that I was not inclined to laugh at the good faith with which the old chevalier recounted to me its inexplicable events, involved as they are in so much mystery. One thing, however

particularly pleased me. I should be able to derive great advantage from it in my eternal discussions on political events with my father. In fact, on the very first reference to the claims of our *legitimate masters*, I unfold the minutest circumstances of this marvellous story to him, and some other royalists, for whose presence I had expressly waited.

"What folly!" exclaims my father; "who can ever have told you such an absurd tale?"

"M. de la Carterie."

On hearing this name, the poor man was struck with astonishment.

"What!" he said, "he who had promised to cure you of your republican mania."

His friends, seeing how much he was disconcerted, treated the old chevalier as a fool. But he was by no means one. I ought, however, to admit that I was afterwards informed he belonged to the sect of the *Illuminés*, founded by Swedenborg, modified and propagated in France by Saint Martin; and of which Cazotte, author of the *Diable Amoureux*, was, by general report, one of the most fervent adepts. Several of the French *illuminati* entertained the same political ideas as my friend, the Chevalier; and one of them, who spoke to me in similar terms, predicted, in 1806, the fall of Napoleon, because he had not fulfilled the mission which God had confided

to him—the restoration, namely, of the throne of France to the descendants of the Iron Mask. Why should you laugh at the superstitions of the inhabitants of a country village, when you see educated and enlightened men of the world infatuated with such baseless dreams?

It cannot be surprising that, during so many years, I endeavoured to satisfy myself regarding the judgment I ought to pass on the character and pretensions of M. de Vernon. For a long time I lost all trace of him; but at length an individual, whose statement I knew to be worthy of confidence, told me that he had known, or rather seen him in Bretagne. According to his account, he was a person, whose external appearance very well corresponded with the portrait, which M. de la Carterie had placed before me. This M. de Vernon, who inhabited a modest chateau, appeared to be living in easy circumstances, in which he was maintained by his credulous adherents. In the country the story of his origin and of his rights was whispered from ear to ear. It appears that during the Empire, he was kept in a state of surveillance; at least, as I was assured by the individual on whose information I am now writing, the prefects sent to him several times, requesting his presence. Although he did not exactly disobey these civil injunctions, he only submitted

to them at the last extremity, and in the manner of a man obliged to bend before his inferiors. He was, doubtless, under the influence of the ideas which had been transmitted to him; he had faith in himself; and he did not appear to me less respectable than any other pretenders. If he is now no more, he has, very probably, left an heir to the crown quite as convinced as he was of the rights of the Iron Mask and of his own.

It must not be imagined that I refer to those relations with persons of birth and distinction to whom we were introduced by the peculiar transactions of the business we followed, in order to weaken the impression of the disagreeable and painful elements which it also involved. Our relations with the inferior classes, and with the unfortunate, were only too numerous. The state of the treasury, the extreme debasement of the paper circulation, and the imperious demand for coin, in all kinds of transactions, had reduced the *Mont-de-Piété*—that establishment which a better organisation would have rendered so advantageous as a source of aid to the poor—to a condition in which it was totally unable to meet the demands made upon it. The working man resorted, therefore, in his necessity, to the various private loan offices that were unavoidably tolerated, in order to obtain the money he required, which was

lent to him at a very high rate. Even if I had not been born of a benevolent disposition, the sight of so much misery, which we only increased by the present assistance we afforded, must have rendered me feeling and compassionate. I am happy that it is in my power to render this justice to my father, in stating that he left me entirely free in my desire to alleviate distress, and, indeed, often set me the example. How many unfortunates have carried back with them from our house the garments of which they had stripped themselves, in order to provide the necessary security for their small loans! My good old grandmother Champy,* who assisted us sometimes,

* On the recurrence of the name of my grandmother in this place, I think it necessary to accompany it with a note for the information of the critics. That one of my songs, which bears the title of *My Grandmother*, can in no respect be considered the portrait of any of my ancestors on the female side—who were all women of the most praiseworthy character. The tailor's wife, to whom the care of my infant years was confided, was very laborious, and sought distraction from her toils only in reading; and my father's, who was no less courageous in the discharge of duty, was equally a model of virtuous excellence.

It formerly appeared to me a very easy matter to distinguish, among the productions of an author, those which are formed under the conditions of his peculiar art and style, and such as are merely the fancies of his mind, from those in which he has had the intention to depict his own character, circumstances, or relations. I have now been enabled to form a contrary judgment.

said to me: "They are deceiving you." This word has often been repeated to me since I have attained to greater experience of the world; but it has never been able to make me deaf to the groans and lamentations of my fellow creatures. Among the great number of unfortunates whom I then saw, I was so happy as to discover an old work-woman, who had been present at my birth. Her history, which is that of so many females of her class, appears to me sufficiently interesting and instructive to find a place here, although unconnected with the narrative of my own life.

The mère Jary, when I discovered her, was at least sixty years of age. The little services that I rendered her even at the time when poverty for me took the place of our brief opulence; those also which she was zealous in rendering to me—mending my worn garments, or putting a little order into the household of

Therefore, as my sister is a *religieuse*, I think it incumbent on me to say that the song, *Le Voisin*, in which occurs the line, "*J'ai une Sœur pour une Béguine*," was composed long before my sister thought of taking the veil.

I have no desire that the application of this line of one of my prefaces: "*Mes chansons; c'est moi*," should be carried too far. They are, indeed, myself; but they are certainly others also, and I am obliged to the critic who, in speaking of my collections, used the expression, "*la comédie des chansons*."—*Note by Béranger.*

a bachelor, established an intimacy between us, which continued until her death. One day, when she was arranging my chamber, I thought I saw tears in her eyes.

"What is the matter with you, mère Jary?"

"Alas! it is my old sorrows that gain the mastery over me. Excuse me."

"Sit down there, and let us talk of your old sorrows. Is it not rather your rent that harasses you? Speak; I am rich to-day."

"No, my child, it is not the rent, this time. I have never related to you the sad story of my life, my miserable life."

"Well, mère Jary, relate it to me now."

"But you are writing."

"What matters it?"

"Well I will tell you, and perhaps I may so give you an opportunity of being useful to me."

THE HISTORY OF LA MÈRE JARY.

I was once very pretty, very gay, and very merry. My mother, who was a little sempstress, taught me her business, and I became an expert needle-woman. I was seventeen years of age when Jary solicited my hand. He was a handsome young man of a joyous disposition, and employed in the stables of the King; it was a fortunate chance for me. My mother, ever

since the death of a son much older than I, in a feeble and suffering state, had a presentiment of her approaching end: and seeing that Jary was not displeasing to me, she hastily concluded the marriage, which for one month was the happiest in the world. But Jary soon showed himself in his true character, a gamester, a drunkard, a libertine. We were living at Versailles; he used to return drunk, to beat me, and to bring girls with him into our home. My sufferings were increased by the death of my mother, from whom I had concealed them, and who had the consolation of believing that I was perfectly happy. I should have been so if Jary had been well conducted. He got into debt, lost his place, and came in one day saying,

"Nannette, I am going to England, where I intend to perfect myself in my condition as a groom."

"And I," I exclaimed; "what am I to do to live?"

"Hold," said he, "here is a louis. You are economical; sell our furniture; return to Paris, and work. Marry again, if you feel inclined. I shall send you a register of my death from London." He embraces me; in a moment he is gone—leaving me speechless and stupified. I have never since heard anything of him.

We poor people have no time to weep out all our grief: I made haste to return to Paris; I obtained

lodging in a confined garret where I set myself to work for the sempstresses. I had not yet finished my eighteenth year, and solitude appeared to me very oppressive. While I worked, I used to sing without any pleasure. The companions of my childhood were all dispersed; the fear of worthless acquaintance prevented me from getting new ones. I always imagined that some friend would surely fall from heaven.

In the house where I lived, opposite the narrow window of my chamber, there was a garret window of the same description. One day in spring, I observed at it a young working tailor, so assiduous at his employment that, during the whole day, which I spent without singing, he did not once turn his eyes in my direction. He was fair, and of fine features: although his complexion was rather pale. On the following morning I saw him by day-break again at his work, which he continued with the same assiduity. On this occasion, however, I ventured to sing, but in a low tone of voice; his eyes were soon turned towards me, and we saluted each other. This introduction was followed by meetings on the staircase; next we rendered to each other the services of good neighbours; and at length a complete intimacy was established between us two, poor young people. He was four years older than I, and by his labour ministered to the wants of an infirm mother, whom, on fête days

and Sundays, he went to visit at Charonne. A mutual tenderness soon rendered us inseparable; and we found it more economical to have only one *ménage* and a common purse. For this I have often prayed for the forgiveness of the good God, when we went to say our prayers together. Alas! at the end of a few months of this happy connexion I became *enceinte*; it was only a joy the more for us. He had just lost his mother, who, in dying, gave us both her blessing. We made sufficient by our united labour to bring up a child. The months of happiness that I passed with this good Paul Gaucher are still present to me. They were followed by no others to make us forget them, and misfortune was close at hand. Gaucher had for a long time suffered from disease of the chest; his illness suddenly made rapid progress; and, notwithstanding all his courage, he was under the necessity, first of working less, and then of having recourse to the physician. He was soon reduced to such a state that he was obliged to remain in bed half the day. Our little savings soon disappeared; debts quickly accumulated; and our linen, our furniture, and our clothes, were all put in pledge. All that would have been of little consequence, if his health had been restored. On the contrary, he got weaker and weaker every day; and when I was confined there did not remain sufficient to pay the nurse.

God gave me a son—a charming boy; but I had no milk to nurture him. He doubtless designed to punish me in this way for my error. We were unable to obtain a nurse. What despair troubled my joy as a mother! To add to this misfortune, my recovery from confinement was long and painful. We did not know what to do to appease the cries of the poor, dear infant. Three days after my confinement, Gaucher, who was extended on a mattress, rises with precipitation, and exclaims, "Give me my boy: in the village where my mother died I am sure to find a nurse. I shall run to it." I do not know how he had the strength to rise and go out, carrying with him our little child, which I had carefully wrapped up, and covered with kisses and tears. In my opinion he would have been necessarily absent the whole day; but, after the lapse of a few hours, I saw him return and fall upon his mattress without being able to utter a single word. In spite of the fever which has by this time seized me, I drag myself towards him, and force him to drink the remainder of the wine which he had laid aside for me. He revives at length; but then tears gush over his face, so exhausted and pale. A secret disquietude agitates me. "And our boy?" I said to him. At these words his tears redouble; he presses me in his feeble arms: "It is in the Foundling Hospital," he answers, falling back upon his mattress.

That, my dear sir, was the most frightful moment of my life; that which filled it with a bitterness of regret, that all the wealth of this world could not have alleviated.

"What!" I exclaimed; "you have carried my son there?"

"Nannette, listen," he said, taking my hands in his; "I have only a few days to live—a few hours, perhaps. I leave you overwhelmed with debt; without a single friend; without the least protection. What would become of you with a child which you are unable to nurture? What would be the lot of this dear infant itself? And who knows? Is it not possible that your husband may return? Pardon me, and listen to me, I pray you. Before depositing him in this hospital, I have had a mark put upon his left thigh, a cross of the form of that which you have pledged. As he was not baptised, I have attached a note to his clothes, in which I have requested that my own name of Paul may be given to him."

Whatever suffering it cost him to say so much he was obliged to repeat the same words to me over and over again: for he saw that in the state of utter dejection and despair into which I was cast, I had neither heard nor understood him.

"The cross will never be effaced," he said; "I have marked it with a red-hot iron."

"With a red-hot iron!" I exclaimed, seized with horror, and shudderingly drawing back from him, as I would have done from an assassin.

"Reassure yourself," said the unfortunate Gaucher; "I took care to use such precautions that the child scarcely uttered a groan."

My agitation was not appeased by the project, I immediately formed in my own mind to lose no time in again obtaining possession of my child. But my miserable state of health, which grew worse, in consequence, doubtless, of the violence of my sorrow, did not permit me to venture out of doors; and on that very night, after the unusual exertions of every kind which he had just made, Gaucher fell into such dreadful convulsions that I believed the hour of his last agony had come. The physician allowed me to entertain no hope of his recovery; and, no longer receiving any payment, discontinued his visits. Gaucher lingered for ten days longer; and it was at the very moment when a glimmer of hope encouraged me, that, after a frightful crisis, I received his last sigh. Poor friend! How loving and good he was! God will have taken pity on his soul. Oh, how often I have prayed the Holy Virgin and his patron saint for him!

Alas! my dear sir, it is now forty-six years since then, and from that moment the recollection of him

and of my only son has been the only companion of my solitude. Yes; since the age of nineteen years I have lived alone—constantly alone. Your grandfather, however, sometimes admitted me into his family: and having instructed me in his business, never allowed me to be without work. This he regarded as a sufficient distraction; for he scarcely knew of any other, with the exception, perhaps, of his Sunday walks, in which, little as you were, he took you out with him to roam in the fields. It was on one of those excursions that, long before the marriage of your mother, I had the happiness to meet him. I was in company with Gaucher, who then worked for him; and since that time the worthy man has always been ready to assist me. I also worked then; but I had debts to the amount of one hundred and seventy-five francs to discharge. People know not how much time it requires for a young workwoman to pay so large a sum, however great may be her courage and economy. Seventeen livres and ten sous deducted in small sums from short working days: it is enormous. I have paid it all, my dear child—paid every farthing. It required ten years to do it in. During these ten years, counting from the day when my health began to be somewhat re-established, you may suppose that I used every means in my power to obtain information regarding

my son. But all my endeavours were vain; for it is the practice of the administration of the Foundling Hospital to refuse all information to mothers regarding the place to which their children are sent. In the utmost despair I was made conscious of this by the first replies that were given me, with a hardness which intimidated me, and perhaps prevented me from doing and from saying all that was necessary. No one listens to us; no one sends assistance to us poor, humble people. Oh, if I could but have known what had become of him! In order to have him again, to nurture and bring him up, what would I not have given! How many nights I should gladly have consented to devote to labour, in addition to those which I already spent in it. After long years of unwearied solicitations, one of the sisters of the house at last took pity on me. She examined the registers, and found, at the period indicated, that a newly-found infant had been baptised under the name of Paul. She wrote to the distant place to which he had been sent, and received an answer, informing her that the nurse and her husband being dead, a child, eight years of age, had been confided to a rich traveller, who had been interested by his fine appearance. Since that time they had heard no more of him; and the curé of the place had forgotten both the name and the country of the traveller.

These details were but little calculated to satisfy the anxiety of a mother. Nevertheless they were the source of great joy. My son had escaped the first maladies of childhood: he must be living; he was living. The more I dwelt upon it, the more I was convinced. All my dreams seemed to bid me hope.

Since that time, I have lived with this dear son: with my Paul; not only searching for him everywhere as much as it was possible in my life of constant labour, but forming an image of him more and more perfect every year. I have seen him when he was quite little; I have seen him grow, become a man; and I see him to-day in his mature age. He resembled me; he will have had my strength; he lives, my heart believes it—is confident of it. Whenever I am alone, he is always before my eyes; it is not long since I exclaimed to myself, "How many grey hairs you have already, Paul!" and I saw him smile upon me sadly. He will also, doubtless, have experienced many sufferings. I know not, nevertheless, why I imagine to myself, that he has ended by making a splendid fortune. I cannot represent him otherwise than as well clothed; but, were he in rags, oh, that I could but press him to my heart before I die!

With what interest I listened to this mother, creating for herself thus the image of a son, of whom

she was incessantly dreaming! Let it not be imagined that this woman was of a feeble intellect; on the contrary, she was of sober sense and upright character; but her maternal sensibility had been developed to this extent by solitude and the necessity of loving. The heart of a mother is an inexhaustible source of miracles.

Becoming conscious of the emotion which she awakened in me, "Do you not think that I shall find him again?" said she.

"I hope so, mère Jary. If he were dead, you would lose the faculty of seeing him in this manner. God would not delude, as in sport, an affection so touching."

Joy glistened in the eyes of the poor woman, who hastily added, "I have very often said that to myself. Ah, if you only knew! When I am in the street, I fix my eyes on all of his age that pass me. I have even dared—I who am so timid—to stop many persons in the street, because their figure, their gait, their features, recalled to me my son, who resembled me so closely, that he might have been taken for me. Some laugh and repel me—saying that I am out of my mind; while others appear to take pity on my embarrassment. And should I tell you, that I—I, a woman—have frequently gone to the banks of the river to see the men bathe, in the hope of discovering the cross of which Paul must have preserved the

mark! How often, after mass on Sunday, have I spent hours on the Pont Neuf, where the crowd is always so great, in order to see if there were no one there who would speak to my heart, or experience on seeing me the emotions of blood. Directed by information obtained by chance, I have often had the boldness to present myself to several *bourgeoisie* and workmen, who bore the name of Paul, or whom I knew to have no family relations. At this very moment, my dear sir, I am engaged in a new inquiry; and that is the reason why I thought it necessary to relate to you the history of my misfortunes. There is an actor of the name of Paul, at the Theatre of the Opera Comique, and I have been unable to obtain his address. Could you get it for me? If you will take an interest in the matter, it appears to me that you will bring me good fortune."

"Mère Jary," I said to her, "you shall have this address to-day." I proceeded at once to find the actor Paul at the theatre, and hastened to bring back his address to her. As I might have anticipated, I saw her arrive at my house, on the following day, sad and disconsolate. The actor Paul had a father and a mother; he had presented them to her; for he appreciated the sentiment which animated the poor woman, and had tenderly received her.

After the lapse of a few months, age, misery, and

her mental sufferings triumphed at length over her strong constitution. Dangerous sores broke out on her limbs, and she was removed to the *Hotel Dieu:* to which, if I had had the means, I should not have allowed her to go. On the first visit that I made to her, she said to me, "If I dared"—

"Do not hesitate, mère Jary."

"Well, I was informed the very day on which I came to this place that a foundling, called Paul, is at present living on the *quai de la Ferraille,* and that he must be about as old as my son must now be."

I went to see this honest working-man; but I discovered that he was of southern origin, and not more than thirty-six years of age. I was again obliged to inflict pain on the poor sufferer, whose state got worse from day to day. One of the sisters, who was employed in the apartment, told me that, as there was no expectation of her recovery, any of her little fancies might be gratified. I brought to her one morning some *confitures* that she had expressed a desire for; but without at all noticing them, she said to me, her eyes radiating with the joy of one of Heaven's elect, "My good friend, my good friend, I have at length seen him in this place, quite close to my bed. He exactly resembled the portrait which the good God has engraved on my heart. His hairs were white as I have told you. It was himself; I shall recover."

"So much the better, mère Jary; but tell me, then, how this happy circumstance occurred to you."

"He was in the midst of a number of physicians and students; he appeared to be their head. Oh, how gentle his voice was! He drew near to my bed; but I know not what happened; he disappeared at the very moment I cried out to him, 'Paul, my son!' I then fainted and lost all knowledge. The good sister soon restored me to consciousness, and I have described him to her. He will return to make his visit to-morrow; and she has promised to bring him to my bed. 'Tis he! 'tis he—return to-morrow—return."

I came to the conclusion, in listening to her, that the pervading sentiment of her whole life had been transformed into a delirium which presaged her end, notwithstanding the fulness of her voice, the animation of her glance, and the force with which she pressed my hand. On the following day she was no more; happy to have terminated her life at the most beatific moment of the dream, which alone had been able to support her in the midst of the misery and tears of fifty years.

Her story, which I wish I had been able to recount with the naïve simplicity of manner that marked her own recital, will serve as a transition by which to pass to the narrative of my own adversities.

In the year 1798 our house went to ruin; and the misfortune, as I had foreseen, inflicted on me one of the most frightful blows I have ever received.

Educated by my aunt in principles of rigorous probity, I was overwhelmed with despair at the idea of a catastrophe I had been unable to prevent or retard, and for which I dreaded I might appear responsible. Indeed, the capitalists had been in the habit of considering me of some account in the confidence which they accorded the house—although it was more than a year since I had ceased to take any part in its operations. Most of them thought themselves justified in addressing me in language of reproach, which I by no means merited. If my father, who was naturally extravagant, expended his money too freely, I was by no means a heavy burden on the resources of the business. I was lodged in a garret without a fire, in which the snow and the rain often overflowed my bed. My pleasures were not expensive; I had not much taste even for matters pertaining to the toilet; and the love of the gaming-table never had any hold of me. My aunt had often said to me, "The opulence of your father will not continue long," and this remark had led me to regulate my conduct. Ill-favoured, and of mean appearance, I have never been in circumstances to expend much in women; who alone could have led me into expensive follies.

In the midst of these fatal circumstances, a passion of a different nature was developed in me. Until this time I had been in the habit of making bad verses, without plan or purpose; but at length the true love of poetry took possession of me. Although still a very imperfect grammarian, I applied myself to the study of the various styles, and to attempt something in almost all of them; and, in a few years, I succeeded in forming for myself a poetic system, almost complete, which I have doubtless since perfected, but which has scarcely varied at all in any of its principal rules. At this period, also, I meditated much on the nature and genius of language—thus venturing to master, at a high point, a science the rudimentary steps of which have often inspired me with a sort of repugnance.

In presence of the misery which ere long began to threaten us, poetry must have appeared to me a consolation expressly conferred by heaven for my benefit. Several capitalists, convinced, in spite of my extreme youth, of my financial abilities and of my honesty, which my tears and despair had so unmistakably proved to them, offered me sufficient funds again to embark in business. My father urged me to accept the offer, but without success. The business inspired me with such an aversion that I rather preferred to remain poor than to return to the Bourse—in

which I have never been able to put a foot without a shuddering of dread.

I then regretted very bitterly that I had ever been moved from the printing press; I have always had a partiality for typography; but I did not suppose that I knew it sufficiently well to derive from it a source of maintenance. I was wrong, however, for I afterwards became convinced, but not till it was too late, that I might have become a skilful workman in a short time; a circumstance that would have spared me many years of privation and of futile expectation.

Whilst my father, though pursued by his creditors, and even thrown into prison, was neither less volatile nor less careless, my desire was to have concealed myself from the whole world. I gave myself up to fits of melancholy, so much the more painful that I was no less expansive in my sorrows than I have always been in my pleasures. The constant fear of encountering the witnesses or the victims of our disaster, led me to indulge in long walks around Paris. Saint Gervais, Romainville, Boulogne, Vincennes, for how many tranquillizing reveries have I been indebted to you! But it was soon necessary to devote myself to the care of a *cabinet de lecture*, which my father had been enabled to acquire. This was to me the occasion of fresh embarrassment. He had associated with me a cousin, a merry youth, who,

while I was rhyming and writing in the midst of our customers, while attending at the counter, expended in his own amusement a part of our little earnings. My father, at length, took charge of the establishment, which had become his last resource. It was situated in the *Rue Saint Nicaise* One evening when I was going to meet him there, I had a narrow escape from being blown up by the *infernal machine*, which would assuredly have blown me into atoms, if it had burst only a few seconds later.

By a singular chance, a few days before this horrible catastrophe, M. de Bourmont, who had treated with the Consular Government; the Abbé Rathel, a man who lived on royalist conspiracies; one named Charles, whose family name has escaped my recollection; and two or three other individuals of the same party, had dined with my father. It was not, however, a political réunion. I had there an opportunity of remarking the little harmony that prevailed among these gentlemen. M. de Bourmont, in particular, appeared to inspire dissatisfaction and suspicion. I was, also, much surprised to find that he was compromised in the affair of Carbon and Saint Régent. I have never met him since this time. The individual named Charles was arrested, I believe, the day after this réunion, and shot by virtue of a former judgment issued against him. When he

was taken, he had formed the design of assassinating the First Consul, a secret he had entrusted to my father, who did all in his power to dissuade him from it. We unavoidably incurred great risk of being compromised by such relations; but my father alone was placed under surveillance, and the Commissary of Police gave him the title of *Banquier des Royalistes.* If the fortune of the party had been judged by that of the banker, bankruptcy was certainly imminent.

I perceive that I have kept silence on the political events of the two last years of the eighteenth century, which were not of a character to mitigate our distresses. It fell to my lot, who had so often been transported with joy at the success of our arms, soon to lament over their repeated reverses, and even to tremble for the independence of the country. On the termination of the Directorial power, the anarchy became so great that the stoutest hearts lost all hope and confidence in the midst of it. It may, therefore, easily be judged what was the state of the timid. I have, then, heard with shame and confusion good *bourgeoisie* express their desire for the triumph of the foreign coalition. The Massenas, the Brunes, who brought back victory to our standards in Switzerland and Holland, did not appear capable of restoring security; the disorders, the corruptions, and the extravagances of the Government of Barras, had so

completely discouraged the nation, which had formerly so much confidence in its own strength.

In the midst of these public misfortunes, an obscure disciple of Juvenal, I was composing my Alexandrine rhymes against Barras and his adherents. It will be seen that I had early imbibed a taste for satire, which was then very general—as the verses of Chamier, Lormian, Despazes, and of many others sufficiently testify. My masterpieces in this style had not time to blossom; Bonaparte returned from Egypt. When the great news of his unexpected return arrived, I was in our *cabinet de lecture*, in the midst of more than thirty persons. They all rose spontaneously, uttering a long cry of joy. The same manifestations of delight were made throughout the whole country. France believed itself now saved. When the presence of a man in a country produces such effects on the people, he is unquestionably their master. The wise and prudent are without any influence in the matter. When Bonaparte disembarked at Fréjus, he was already the Emperor Napoleon.

I had always had a mischievous pleasure in predicting to my father the future elevation of the conqueror of Arcole and of Lodi. His progress in Egypt had not removed the idea that he would ultimately become the supreme head of the government. Like the other royalists, my father was not disposed to

regard him in any other light than that of a Monk. As for me, I applauded along with all France the revolution of the 18th Brumaire, not, however, without entertaining my fears that the young general would not pause in his career at the Consulate.

If I am asked how it was that, with all my previsions, I was not revolted by the violation of the constitution of the 18th Brumaire, I will candidly reply that, in my mind, patriotism has always overruled all political doctrines, and that Providence does not always leave to nations the choice of the means by which their safety is to be secured. This great man alone was able to elevate France from the abyss into which the Directory had ended by precipitating her. I was only nineteen years old at this time, and the whole world appeared to be only of my age in order to think as I did. The opposing parties had destroyed each other by violence; and their agitations, by which people were alarmed, were only the spasms of their last agony. This alarm was sufficient to prevent the small number of voices that demanded a free republic from finding an echo. It was imagined that they had had such a one in '93, but that republic had no longer any but fools to wish for it. The wise and prudent, who still spoke of liberty, did so with that distrust with which their own minds had been inspired by the result of the unfortunate and

badly managed attempts that had been already made. Besides, very few of these politicians recommended themselves by the spirit of application, without which the best principles so speedily lose all consideration. At last France absolutely required a strong government to deliver it from the Jacobins and the Bourbons, from uncertainty and anarchy. The youth, intoxicated with the glory of the young Consul, eagerly offered themselves from every quarter for the accomplishment of his designs, without thinking even of asking him to render any account of them. In order to judge of the enthusiasm with which he was regarded, it was only necessary to remark in the theatres the frenzy of applause with which the slightest allusion to the dispersion of the representatives at Saint Cloud was received, and to listen to the peals of laughter that saluted the witty hits hurled against the small number of Brutuses, who, to avail myself of one of the expressions of the period, had dared to resist the new Cæsar!

Who would suppose that the first germ of opposition excited in my mind against the Consular Government was directed against the practice of borrowing from Greece and Rome the ancient names of offices, which were now given to new functions, and, at a later date, to the establishments of public instruction. Consuls, tribunes, prefects, prytanées, lyceums—all

these words appeared to be sacramental with the New World of eighty-nine, that had bequeathed to us an abundance of words of a similar origin. It was, doubtless, very childish on my part, but I have always detested this pedantic imitation of the ancients. Only think, in our country, of Herault de Séchelles not being able to set himself to work on our constitution, unless he were successful in procuring, before everything else, the laws of Minos. From this mixture that we have made of the Ancient and the Modern, of Paganism and of Christianity, a disconnected and inharmonious system of civilisation has been evoked—a thing of shreds and patches—a sort of harlequin's coat, which fortunately is beginning to show symptoms of dilapidation. My indignation on this subject caused much laughter at the time, and will still, perhaps, call forth a smile even in the present day. That has not prevented me, in spite of all my love for the Greeks, from regarding with an unfavourable eye the great men of Plutarch, and even Plutarch himself,—that Greek who ventures not to appreciate either the political greatness of Demosthenes or the genius of Aristophanes. Let us study Antiquity, let us respect Tradition, but let us not borrow what we are unable to accommodate to our different condition. My admiration for Bonaparte has not prevented me from treating him as something of a pedant.

Paoli had well divined his character; he was in many respects a hero of Plutarch; and I hope, therefore, he will remain the last, and, perhaps, the greatest of the men of that Old World, which he so loved to remodel—in his own manner it must be confessed. Alas! nothing is so calculated to bring down misfortune as the vain struggle against a new world and new ideas. Napoleon attempted the task, and succumbed. It was a confirmation of the expression of Paoli, when, in 1818, he wrote to the Prince Regent of England, that he was coming, like Themistocles, to seat himself at the hearth of the British nation.* The English people and their prince have well displayed their sensibility to this recollection of Plutarch.

During the early period of the Consulate, in order to escape from the painful position in which I was placed, I used my utmost exertions to get sent out to Egypt, where our army still appeared capable of

* In 1841 we treated Napoleon according to his own taste in such matters. After the publication of the procès verbal of the proceedings of exhumation, which testified that his remains were in a state of preservation so perfect as to raise the cry of Miracle, the newspapers and the publications of the authorities spoke to us of the ashes *(cendres)* of Napoleon. The poets, it may be presumed, were not the last to avail themselves of the use of this word, *cendres*. We are also informed that an old soldier, on hearing it repeated, exclaimed, "See! these English scoundrels have burnt him."

maintaining its resistance for a long time. Parceval-Grandmaison, whom I knew, and who had returned from that country with Bonaparte, being consulted by me, with reference to this project, endeavoured to dissuade me from it, by pointing out the inconveniences with which it was attended, and I was constrained to give in to his opinion. How often has he since said to me, "Was I not in the right?" Doubtless he was; yet I cannot admit that I was wrong, for I had to resolve a problem difficult to me, how, namely, not to be a burden to my father, and to find the means of support for myself—it mattered not in what quarter of the world.

There was, however, some alleviation to my poverty. I was inhabiting a garret, on the fifth story, in the Boulevard St. Martin. What a beautiful prospect I enjoyed from it! How I delighted in the evening to hover in spirit, as it were, over the immense city, especially when to the murmurs which were unceasingly ascending from it were added the noise and tumult of some great storm! I had installed myself in this lofty abode with inexpressible satisfaction. I was destitute of money, without any certain prospect for the future; but I considered myself fortunate in being at length delivered from the anxiety of so many unfortunate transactions—by which all my better feelings and tastes had been constantly ruffled.

To live alone, and to compose verses at my leisure, appeared to me the very summit of felicity. And then, my budding wisdom was not of that kind which dispenses with all joy; very far from it! Perhaps I have never thoroughly known what our ancient and modern romancers call love: for I have ever regarded woman, not as a wife or as a mistress—relations which too often put her in the condition either of a slave or a tyrant—but I have always seen in her a friend whom God has bestowed upon us. That tenderness, mingled with esteem, with which this sex has inspired me from my youth, has never ceased to be the source of my sweetest consolations. I have thus completely triumphed over a lurking disposition to indulgence in gloomy humours—the returns of which became less and less frequent under the influence of women and of poetry. It would have been sufficient to have expressed my gratitude to women for this blessing, for poetry came to me from them.

But even when this troublesome disposition held me most completely under its tyrannizing power, I was able in our friendly réunions to cast it off, and to show myself the most unrestrained and the gayest of all. How delightful a thing it is to possess friends! My literary meditations did not prevent me from preparing songs for all the joyous dinners in which the resources of our purse permitted us to indulge.

Not a single carnival passed without masquerades; to play comedy was one of my greatest amusements; and I composed little vaudevilles for our private *fêtes*—a circumstance which renders the more extraordinary the little pleasure I afterwards experienced in the amusements of the theatre.*

I formed at this period several friendly connections, which I still enjoy. One of them was with Antier, who has composed many works for our second-rate theatres, and who has produced so many beautiful songs still unpublished, he having never made it the object of his serious consideration to acquire a reputation for himself, as he easily might have done. Another was Lebrun, a man of the purest and best of characters,

* The Editor of Béranger has recently been very fortunate in the acquisition of a manuscript, of not less than a hundred pages folio, and bearing the date of 1809. It is accompanied by a letter explanatory of the circumstances in which, at this time, Béranger had undertaken a series of historical studies on the heroes of Greek antiquity. These studies had, according to all appearance, been ordered by a publisher; but if he wrote a hundred pages to make a beginning with this "galerie mythologique," there is reason to believe that he never finished it, and that he soon became disgusted with a task, which did not leave him the liberty of distributing and treating the subject in his own manner. In his letter he asks for a *collaborateur*. "I am a poor hand at hack work," he said; "I am little suited for this kind of labour, and shall never be able to find much satisfaction in it." If they should be unable to meet with any one

who became an academician, but who, notwithstanding the deserved success of his beautiful literary works, allowed himself to sink too prematurely into a state of discouragement. The last of these friends was Wilhem Bocquillon, the discoverer of an admirable method of music, who, by extending the popularity of his art, has rendered a great service to France, and particularly to the working classes, the amelioration of whose condition music is calculated to promote.

In speaking of Wilhem—who has composed such charming airs for some of my songs, and who was prevented from attaining a high reputation as a composer, in consequence of the time which he devoted to his method—I am desirous of introducing a letter in couplets, such as I have written many of, and

to assist him, " be assured," he adds, " that by the end of October, even should I be compelled to give my nights to it, you shall have the entire work."

This letter is dated the 28th of July. Our curiosity is certainly gratified in learning the nature of the employment in which Béranger was engaged at a time when we should have been inclined to believe that his mind was entirely occupied with his friends and his light songs. The fragments of the proposed work that have been preserved consist of really erudite articles on Achilles, Diomed, Theseus, Hercules, and other personages of fabulous history. We also find in them traces of the frequent readings, in which Béranger at that time indulged, of the translations of the ancient poets.—*Editor's Note.*

which I addressed to him on the occasion of the *Te Deum* sung at Notre Dame, in the presence of all the courtier kings by whom Napoleon was attended. I possessed a ticket of admission.

On Sunday, five Kings, in church, I fear,
Will lead our thoughts from God astray;
I believe, in short, they will look for *me* there,
I must send my shirt to be washed to day.
I have a black coat, I have a hat,
In capital hose behold my riches;
I have everything I shall want, save that
Alas! it is needful to have breeches!

Long live that woman of sense divine,
Who provides the Academy with theirs!
For I know, in my heart, the sisters nine
Have a different fancy, and no such cares.
Between ourselves, friend, I don't believe
In the virtue, which calls us sots and wretches,
For these ladies find it good sport to leave
The friends of their choice without any breeches!

Thou, whose heart, always a generous one,
Is open to those oppressed by fate;
Thou, who never makest fun
Of the plaints of the unfortunate;
Thou, who canst live like a Crusoe,
Whilst me like a football fortune reaches,
Who canst stay at home, nor heed the show,
Wilt thou lend me thy pair of breeches?*

Only one of my friends, under the influence of

* Béranger has just spoken of his friend Antier, and of his talent as a song-writer.

We find here, in the manuscript, some verses which

political feeling, in 1815, dissolved the ties that bound us together. He was a celebrated artist, a man of a character generally amiable and mild, but whose vanity led him to take delight in aristocratic

M. Antier addressed to Béranger, in 1821, at the very moment when he was about to be conveyed to prison, after his first trial. Béranger, without doubt, wished them to be printed in this place, and desired to consecrate in this way the recollection of an old friendship, which praised him in song, and encouraged him long before the dawn of his reputation.—*Editor's Note.*

A BÉRANGER

AU MOMENT OÙ IL VA ENTRER EN PRISON.

(1821.)

Air : *d'Octavie.*

Aux dieux des cours puisqu'on te sacrifie
Pour n'avoir cru qu'à des dieux indulgents,
A ton départ l'amitié te confie,
Pendant trois mois, au Dieu des bonnes gens.

Exempt de soins comme d'inquiétude,
Sur ton grabat, couché paisible et pur,
Tu dormiras mieux dans la solitude
Que les tyrans sur l'or et sous l'azur.

Quand du repos les tranquilles délices
Rafraîchiront tes membres fatigués,
Un rêve affreux leur rendra les supplices
Que la vengeance a toujours prodigués.

Loin des flatteurs, leurs conseillers intimes,
Dans l'insomnie, au sein des longues nuits,
Un souvenir de leurs tristes victimes
Ajoutera le remords aux ennuis.

Tu rêveras l'époque glorieuse
Où les partis oublieront leurs malheurs ;
Le trône libre et la patrie heureuse,
Te décernant des lauriers et des fleurs.

society. This old friend repented of his estrangement from me; but I have never believed in the possibility of the reconciliation of friendship, except in cases of misunderstanding.

I attribute the first idea which I formed of committing my songs to writing to a long illness of this artist, during the continuance of which I constantly tended him. I recalled to my recollection more than forty, in the course of the long nights that I sat by his bedside, near which he was unable to endure a

Honneur à toi! La chanson, libre et fière,
Sur le Parnasse a droit de se ranger.
La France encor ne compte qu'un Molière;
La France aussi n'aura qu'un Béranger.

Tous deux, bravant une crainte servile,
Sans nul égard des couleurs ni des rangs,
Ont, à la cour, flétri, comme à la ville,
Le ridicule et les intolérants.

Mais on s'expose à dangereuse épreuve
Lorsqu'à des fous on veut parler raison;
Et bienheureux, Socrate en est la preuve,
D'en être quitte alors pour la prison.

Aux dieux des cours lorsqu'on te sacrifie
Pour n'avoir cru qu'à des dieux indulgents,
A ton départ l'amitié te confie,
Pendant trois mois, au Dieu des bonnes gens.

Tu n'irais pas où Marchangy te loge,
Pour quelques traits malins ou graveleux.
Si des pouvoirs ta muse eût fait l'éloge
Dans vingt recueils brochés exprès pour eux.

Bon citoyen, de bassesse incapable,
Quand l'étranger donnait chez nous le ton,
Tu ne vins pas, d'une rime coupable,
Diviniser Blücher et Wellington.

regular nurse—although his fortune would have allowed him to have more than one. I sung them to him as I wrote them, in order to distract his mind during the tedious and painful nights that he passed without sleep. Good, however, as my memory is, of the multitude I have composed, it must have allowed many to escape. It has just furnished me, at the present time, with some couplets, which I wrote in reply to a letter, in which this ungrateful friend said

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. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Ah! l'on a dû calomnier ta vie.
Tu repoussais un régime sanglant,
Et nul n'a droit, sans exciter l'envie,
D'être honnête homme avec un beau talent.

Tremblez, cafards! Son vers ridiculise
L'hypocrisie et ses pieux excès.
Tremblez, ingrats! Son vers immortalise
Les détracteurs du courage français.

Soit qu'il proclame, ou qu'il chante, ou qu'il peigne
Un Dieu de paix, nos plaisirs, nos travers;
C'est tour à tour Collé, Rousseau, Montaigne;
C'est la nature: elle inspire ses vers.

D'un goût exquis, d'un commerce modeste,
Toujours prodigue et de zèle et de soins,
Quoique bien pauvre, il trouve encor du reste
Pour obliger des amis au besoin.

Aux dieux des cours lorsqu'on te sacrifie,
Pour n'avoir cru qu'à des dieux indulgents,
A ton départ l'amitié te confie,
Pendant trois mois, au Dieu des bonnes gens.

to me, after the 20th of March, that it was necessary we should not meet again until after the restoration of the Bourbons. I did not send these verses to him, and, as long as he lived, I considered it incumbent on me not to publish them.

Our warm regards let us suppress,
  You write me, and that day await,
Which the return shall gladly bless
  Of our old lords legitimate.
Ah! keep, then, thy indifference,
  Thy hopes to me but shudderings send;
It were too much that the tears of France
  To me should bring back such a friend.

I loved you, and you think men chase
  Poor friendship, like a vagrant-vain,
Who finds by the fire at night a place,
  But with the dawn goes forth again.
No: from the roof where shelter lay,
  In joy and sorrow, if she flies,
Driven by ingratitude away,
  Crossing the threshold, there she dies.

She dies! I feel that she must die,
  Proudly she yields to thy decree,
At which deep in my heart I sigh,
  But which will not break thy heart in thee.
Believe me, if thy party win,
  Whatever I meet of risk or dangers,
I shall not fly thy door within,
  Thou still must open it to strangers.

But let us return to the year 1801, when I was residing in my garret on the Boulevard Saint Martin.

My misery was increasing; and the conscription added a new source of anxiety to the other troubles of my life. It was easy to live on bread and cheese, notwithstanding the strength of my appetite. But how was I to avoid the military levy, and those who carried it into execution?

My feeble constitution, and the weakness of my eyesight, which would have reduced me to the condition of a hospital soldier, placed me in the category of those who might hope for certain exemption. No one believed that, pale and meagre as I was, I should ever attain to my thirtieth year. My chest appeared to be in a very bad condition, and my father was constantly repeating to me, "You have not long to live. I shall bury you soon." Neither of us was afflicted at such a prospect. Unfortunately, the position which the *cabinet de lecture* appeared to give him, laid him under the obligation, in case my exemption was not granted, of providing a substitute, which, in his circumstances, it was impossible for him to do.

Being perfectly satisfied, in my own conscience, of my incapacity for military service, I could only fall upon one method of saving my father the expense which this matter was likely to bring upon him. I did not, although such a course was at that time possible, get my name entered on the *contrôles*.

But I thus placed myself in circumstances under which my arrest was almost inevitable. This was a painful source of anxiety, added to so many others I was already enduring. Many young persons are discouraged by infinitely less. I kept up, however, against adversity, and Providence came to my assistance. Being bald at twenty-three years of age, without any other appreciable cause than the headaches from which I suffered, I was able, in consequence of the apparent maturity which such an appearance confers, to defy the *gendarmes* and police officers, who were constantly on the trace of refractory conscripts. It was quite sufficient for me to take off my hat in their presence. The aspect of my forehead, which, before the age of thirty, seemed to accuse me of forty-five years, at once led them to renounce the idea of asking for my papers. I was, for a long time, obliged to pay my salutation to these gentlemen—the refractory of my class not having been amnestied until the marriage of Napoleon with Marie Louise, an event which proves that the little do not always suffer in consequence of the follies of the great.

As to fortune, it also suffered itself to be touched by my misfortunes. I had spent three years in endeavouring to find some little employment. I had occupied myself with rhyming, passing from political

satire to odes and idyls—from comedy to the epic poem. Urged by my ever-recurring necessities, I one day formed the idea of writing to M. Lucien Bonaparte. This was in the beginning of 1804. I have elsewhere related what a fortunate circumstance this desperate step was for me; but I take pleasure in recalling the miserable condition to which I was reduced, and the menacing future which was before me, when this ray of the sun fell upon me.

My gold watch and some other wrecks of our fleeting opulence had, for a long time, been engaged as pledges at the *Mont de Piété;* my wardrobe was composed of three bad shirts, which a friendly hand wearied itself in endeavouring to mend, of a thin and well-patched great coat, a pair of trousers with a hole in the knee, and a pair of boots, which I regarded with despair, each morning, as I was engaged in restoring their lustre, discovering some new damage. I had just committed to the post four or five hundred verses in a *lettre d'envoi* to M. Lucien—taking care not to reveal to any one this last attempt, made after so many other unavailing ones. Two days having elapsed without reply, the good Judith in whose company I finished my days, amuses herself in consulting the cards, and predicts the arrival of a letter that is sure to overwhelm me with joy. Notwithstanding my little faith in the science of Mademoiselle Lenormand, the

utterance of this prediction makes me experience a foretaste of the joy which Judith announces to me, for poverty is superstitious. As soon as I had entered into my poor little chamber, I fell asleep, dreaming of the letter carrier. But I awake, and—adieu, ye bright illusions! The damaged boots meet my sight; and, moreover, his old pair of trousers must be patched by the tailor's grandson.

Needle in hand, I continued ruminating on some exceedingly misanthropical rhymes, such as I was then in the occasional habit of composing, when my *portière* enters out of breath, and hands me a letter, the superscription of which was unknown to me. Rhyme, needle, trousers, everything is forgotten. In my agitation I cannot muster up courage to open the missive. At last, with a trembling hand, I break the seal; the senator, Lucien Bonaparte, has read my verses, and he wishes to see me. Let such young poets as are in my position imagine to themselves my happiness, and describe it if they can. It was not fortune which first appeared to me; it was glory. My eyes swelled with tears, and I returned thanks to God, whom I have never forgotten in my moments of prosperity.

Hastily obtaining the loan of garments more suitable than my own, I repair to the presence of the brother of the First Consul. When, indeed, I think

of the two feeble dithyrambic poems, (*Le Retablissement du Culte* and *Le Deluge*), which I had ventured to send to this illustrious man, himself an orator and a poet, I cannot but be astonished at the marks of benevolence which he so liberally bestowed upon me. He had the kindness to assure me that he would assume the responsibility of watching over my destiny; and, notwithstanding his precipitate departure for Rome, he soon gave me a proof of his sincerity. He was not long in sending me from that city a *procuration*, authorising me to obtain the *honoraria*, to which he was entitled as a member of the Institute; and the arrears of three years were paid to me at once. I presented the largest portion of this sum to my father, to whom I was now indebted for the support of many months; and I was able to provide for my own wants with the thousand francs annually, which the *traitement* of an academician was worth to me.

In the only two interviews which I had at this time with M. Lucien, he made some observations on the bold innovations of my style. I had no desire to defend anything, and I confessed to him that I had never had the benefit of classical instruction. It had never before cost me such an effort to avow that I was ignorant of Latin, that language without which, with every one else at that time, I believed it was im-

possible to write French well. Such was, doubtless, the opinion of M. Lucien also, but he had the goodness to say nothing of it to me; all that he did was, to persuade me to attempt a Roman subject, the *Death of Nero*. In a poem of about two or three hundred verses, I endeavoured to depict the last moments of this crowned comedian; but, with such a subject, I was out of my element. I have never been able to manage any other subjects than those which are spontaneously suggested by my own mind, and I have always found imitation impossible. Besides, Paganism and Antiquity, which I knew quite as well as if I had been several years at college, had no attractions for my young muse, which was completely French, completely modern, and already in arms against Mythology, which at that time was so much abused, especially by Delille and Lebrun-Pindare. The poem of *Nero* contained only a few passages of considerable power, in which a certain tendency to simplicity made its appearance—a tendency the value of which I immediately acknowledged, when, renouncing the alarming facility with which I had at first accumulated heaps of verses, I began to labour with reflection. That, it may be remarked, in passing, is no slight restraint for a rhymer of twenty to subject himself to. It is true that I had patience enough to copy *Athalie*

twice; a study which, I am persuaded, has had a very favourable influence upon me.

In one of my conversations on French versification with M. Lucien, a partisan of forms, which I accused of being rather antiquated, in order to show him the conception of style I entertained, I recited to him some forty verses, composed in a manner the very reverse of that of Delille. This poet was in great favour; but, notwithstanding the admirable talent of the master, his manner of writing appeared to me, in certain respects, false and dangerous. I spoke, in this fragment of the fall of the Bourbons, and of the elevation of Bonaparte; and the following passage occurred in it:

" Le soleil vit, du haut des voûtes éternelles,
Passer dans les palais des familles nouvelles;
Familles et palais, il verra tout périr."

If there was nothing in this passage very original in expression, the recital of such verses to a man of yesterday, in the splendid gallery in which he received me, was at least a strange circumstance. I had, as it were assumed, the part of the prophet Habakkuk. My indulgent auditor was not the less warm in his praises of the ideas I had expressed.

The protection of M. Lucien, notwithstanding the exile to which he afterwards condemned himself, did

not cease to be useful to me. One requires to have something to say of himself, and it was a great deal when I could say I was under his protection. At twenty-five years of age, I at length possessed what I always so much desired, a modest employment. I entered the bureaux of the painter Landon, where I prepared and arranged the text of his *Musée*. This work consisted of a collection of pencil-drawings of the pictures and statues in the gallery of the Louvre, so rich at that time in the fruits of our noble and loyal conquests—whatever the Duke of Wellington, who might have reserved his moral lessons for the spoliators of India, may have allowed himself to say. Intimate as I was with several painters, it was easy for me to accomplish my new task; and it gave me an opportunity of perfecting my taste in the plastic arts, thanks to the counsels of Landon, who was destitute neither of tact nor of knowledge. The eighteen hundred francs of this place, together with the ten thousand francs of the Institute, enabled me to procure the most delightful enjoyments of riches, for I could assist my father, and lend a helping hand to my poor grandmother, the widow of the good old tailor, whose ruin had been accomplished by the assignats. I could even be of service to my sister also, a workwoman in the house of one of my aunts.

Constantly harassed by the dread of being one

day compelled to make literature a trade, foreseeing that my actual employment had but little stability, I neglected no means to obtain a more certain occupation. With that view, I addressed myself to M. Arnault, a tragic poet, the friend of Lucien Bonaparte, and Chief of the Division of Public Instruction at the Ministry of the Interior. I might also have thought of M. de Fontanes, who was equally the friend of my protector, and who had told me that he had read to him my verses. But I had been informed of Arnault's independence of character, in consequence of which he had been unable to advance in the favour of the First Consul. That circumstance determined my choice. Arnault soon became my friend; and if his limited influence did not enable him to procure a situation for me until three years later, he did not the less unceasingly manifest the signs of that true interest which he felt on my behalf. Besides, he opened to me the doors of the World of Literature, which it had never been in my power to frequent till then.

His desire was, that I should have written in the newspapers; but I never felt any vocation for this species of labour, which has swallowed up and destroyed in our country so many young men of talent—born, perhaps, for a future of glory. Besides, my lingering pen and my timorous conscience were

startled at the prospect of such a vocation—the adoption of which would have also rendered necessary the renunciation of my fairest poetical hopes and dreams. That would have rendered my garret a very solitary abode.

The *Genie du Christianisme*, notwithstanding the criticisms which this book provoked in the philosophical world, and the form in which the author had expressed his sentiments, inspired me with the greatest enthusiasm. Chateaubriand revealed in quite an original manner the beauties of the writers of antiquity, and was the means of restoring to literature that religious element, which appeared to be completely banished from our poetry. His work furnished me with a course of study, far more inspiring than the works of Le Batteux and La Harpe. With the exception of the tears of admiration which the *Iliad* of Madame Dacier had constrained me to shed, and the species of passion with which I was inspired by Aristophanes, whose genius, in my opinion, is still imperfectly appreciated among us, I had not been able to form any adequate conception of Greek poetry. I am indebted to M. de Chateaubriand for the glimpse I obtained of it, in connection with the poetry of the Hebrews. He also enabled me, without submitting entirely to all the opinions of this great writer, to form a more sound judgment in relation to our own literature. I have

had the misfortune—for it is certainly one—of being unable to bend the neck under any yoke; a circumstance, however, which has not prevented me from acknowledging, with due gratitude, those whom I have chosen as my masters.

With an unshaken foundation of that faith which is termed Deism, a faith so deeply engraven on my heart that, united with all my other sentiments, it might even merge into superstition, were it not prevented by the clearer light and influence of reason; with those melancholy dispositions that are the result of misfortune, and under the impressions produced by the works of Chateaubriand, I had thoughts of returning into the bosom of the Catholic church. I consecrated to it my poetical attempts; I attended the churches in the hours of solitude; and I indulged in the reading of ascetic works, in addition to the Gospel, which, notwithstanding my own decided opinions, has always furnished me with reading, philosophical in its nature, and by far the most consoling. Alas! my intentions led to no result. I have often said that the only thing of which reason was capable was to sink us when we fell into the water. Nevertheless, to my misfortune, she at this time assumed absolute dominion over my mind. Fool! She would not suffer me to believe in that which formed the faith of Turenne, Corneille, and Bossuet. And yet

I have always been, I am at present, and I hope I shall die, that which, in Philosophy, is termed a spiritualist. It even appears to me that this profound sentiment pervades, and is visible in my foolish songs, for the composition of which some charitable souls would have been gratified if they had seen me, twenty years ago, burnt in the public street in the same manner as Dolet and Vanini formerly were.

I have now remaining only some very mediocre verses, composed under the influence of a faith, with which my pervading spiritualism inspired me. These I shall probably soon commit to the flames; but in the meantime, they excite a smile whenever my eyes fall upon them. Much as I like to see a poet inspired with religious feeling, when he writes on religious subjects, I regard it as altogether absurd when he represents himself as animated by a faith of which he is really destitute. The eye of the truly devout is not so easily deceived; and it is soon seen that he is only assuming for a time a religious part, to the requirements of which he very soon shows himself unfaithful.* We do not at present take into account the risk he runs of falsifying and misrepresenting his own talent, of which perfect sincerity of sentiment is always the most solid support.

* Chateaubriand himself, for instance! Of how many heresies may he be accused!—*Note by Béranger.*

I am not one of those who think that the poet, at the present day, fills any priestly office. Far from me be such an anachronism! But because poetry is scarcely more than an object of luxury in the actual world, the poet ought not the less to endeavour to preserve sufficient moral unity in his works and character, in order that no shadow of doubt may be cast on his good faith, in the expression of opinions which he wishes to serve and propagate.

To give a hasty view of some of my first attempts, I may state that I had formed the idea of a poem on *Clovis*, in which my design was to depict the Gallic episcopate lending its assistance in the foundation of our old empire. I almost finished a pastoral poem, the subject of which touched on the epoch of Jeanne d'Arc, and a considerable number of idyls, having reference to modern manners. I also attempted several comedies, two of which were in five acts. There was one, among many others, written on or against the *savants* (to whom I have often failed in the manifestation of that respect which I entertain for science itself); and a second, entitled *The Hermaphrodites*, a strange title, under which I depicted certain effeminate men, the remains of the old régime, and certain women affecting the manners of men. I even wrote several acts of these two pieces; and it was not any possible imperfection in respect to

common sense, which arrested the progress of these works, but the care which, almost in spite of myself, I bestowed on the composition of verses, pre-occupied as I was with the selection of the form and the point of the language, even substituting occasionally the image for the simple expression of the thought.

In this style, which has some relation to that of the epistle, comedies are produced resembling the *Méchant* of Gresset; but we are far from approaching, I will not say, Molière, who alone rises to perfection in the comic vein, but even Regnard, who, as the author of the *Misanthrope*, with different means, and a different end, produces in one flow the longer speeches and the dialogue in a form, at the same time witty, fluent, and gay. I cannot avoid here remarking that this author is too much neglected in our courses of literature; and the world is far from appreciating his style, his charming and light-hearted improvisation—all the merit of which La Harpe has been incapable of perceiving. In my opinion, Regnard would have been the first of modern comic writers, if Molière had not been given to us. The more complete our comprehension of his genius, so much the more shall we admire Molière, since it will always be with so much the more astonishment that we shall measure the distance which separates them. Rousseau,

who always appears to think that those who make others laugh make them laugh at him, has treated him no better than Molière. But I ask this question: Give the title of the *Vieux Célibataire* to the *Légataire Universel*, and what will you have to say?

For the hundredth time, then, I began to re-peruse my favourite authors; and I felt that I had no longer the courage to complete comedies, more than seven acts of which were sent to rejoin other abandoned fragments. I allowed to myself that I might be able to appropriate a certain style, and even to be a writer of imagination, but that I should certainly never be a dramatic author. In an age of assumption, few are able to discover so quickly their feeble points. I have always experienced infinite satisfaction in the recollection of this act of good sense.

If, since that time, I ever attempted to write for the stage, it was because necessity compelled me. Fortunately, I never obtained the honour even of a reading. Not to speak of my incapacity, what would have been my fate in a career presenting so many obstacles, and in which self-interest, vanity, and self-love are constantly struggling and hesitating at no means by which to attain their ends? But even with the genius of Molière, my character would have led

to failure, before any piece of mine could have been brought upon the stage.*

There was little political agitation under the Imperial Government. Nevertheless, politics always engaged my mind, and although I had almost foreseen the direction which the ambition of Napoleon would follow, the re-establishment of a throne was to me a subject of great sorrow. Being much less a man of opinions than a man of instinct and of sentiment, I am naturally inclined to republicanism. I shed tears over the Republic—not those tears written with points of exclamation, of which poets are so

* I was named, however, at the *Théatre du Vaudeville* in the first years of the Restoration. Moreau and Wailland had proposed that I should lend my assistance in the preparation of a piece entitled "*Les Caméléons.*" But I did not fulfil my task, gave up the *collaboration*, and ought not to have been named. I have never either seen or read the piece; and in spite of the persuasions of the two authors, I refused to accept my share of the receipts. I know that a *bibliomane*, M. de Soleinne, has attributed to me the couplets of several of Antier's pieces. This is so much the more ridiculous that the talent of my friend for this kind of work is far superior to any I possess. I believe I composed a dozen couplets for the *Caméléons*, and, to his great surprise, Moreau found only two or three of them passable.—*Note by Béranger.*

prodigal, but such as a soul, living and breathing in an atmosphere of independence, sincerely sheds over the wounds inflicted on the country and on liberty. My admiration for the genius of Napoleon did not in the least diminish the aversion with which I regarded the despotism of his government, so much the more, that at that time I did not attribute so much importance as I have since, to the necessities which the constantly-renewed enterprises of the European aristocracy imposed upon him.

Another disappointment was soon added to that. Of all the brothers of the Emperor, M. Lucien alone derived no benefit from his elevated fortune, and remained in a state of exile, which was suspended only during the Hundred Days. The gratitude with which I regarded him was pained by the knowledge that he was then living forgotten at Rome; and I felt inspired by the idea of rendering him a public homage. I had only a few pieces of pastoral poetry, which I had almost finished. Throwing aside all the *amour-propre* of an author, all pretensions to a degree of perfection to which these poems could never rise, I formed a small volume of them, headed them with a dedicatory epistle, and endeavoured to obtain a publisher for them. If we had enjoyed the least liberty of the Press, the dedication alone would have enabled me to secure the publisher I required; but it was

necessary to submit my work to the literary police.

I was recommended by Arnault to Lemontey, an academician, who enjoyed the reputation of being the most accommodating of the imperial censors. He condemned, at first sight, the dedication of the book, and the epilogue of a pastoral poem which I addressed to M. Lucien. I introduce it here. It will serve to enable the reader to appreciate the official susceptibility of the good Lemontey, who, with all his censorial strictness, was not less in the habit of railing at kings and emperors.

. . . . . .

In an age of glory, why should it be.
That we die obscure, my verse and I?
Of a noble music the ancient age
Never, alas! hath taught me the spell,
Nor the nurse of genius, knowledge sage,
Her pure milk offered like a well.
What ask ye of me who no master has had?
Misfortune's hard lessons have formed me alone;
If my spring with green blades of corn is clad
They are those of a field where nothing was sown.
Ah, I would wish by these rural lays,
Protector, who fliest the court of power,
To charm thy heart to the peaceful ways,
Where odours and loves are in every bower.
God, doubtless, has storms for the fields; yet days
Of sunshine he sends for each darker hour.
You who dig through the old arenas of fame *

* M. Lucien has caused considerable excavations to be made in the neighbourhood of Rome.—*Note by Béranger.*

Where the kings of the universe held their state
What remains of their pomp and heroic name?
Vain fragments and sepulchres desolate!
What a lesson for great men lingers there!
Wilt thou, then, listening to my voice,
Full of virtues which grow in the quiet air,
Loving field and wood that refuge brings
Confide in the fate which has been thy choice?
For the world's example rest, rest there,
Free from crowns that oppress the brow of kings.

. . . . . .

If the rigours of the censorship are to be estimated by this specimen, the reading of these verses will, perhaps, also show how much personal abnegation there was in their publication. In proof of the judgment I formed of the entire collection, I gave up the idea of having them printed, as soon as I became convinced of the impossibility of showing my respect for M. Lucien by their publication. This fragment had no better fortune under the Restoration. Having re-adapted it, in order to secure its appearance, I sent it to the *Almanach des Muses*, but was unsuccessful in my attempt to get it published. It was not until the year 1833 that I was able, by means of some lines of prose, to express publicly, in a suitable manner, my gratitude to the illustrious *proscrit*, whom I had only seen twice since the 20th of March, 1815. In consequence of my reputation as a writer of songs, he then addressed to me some sharp reproaches for my abandonment of the more

elevated styles. Being unable to convince him that this abandonment was yet far from forming any part of my intention, I considered it necessary to keep myself at a distance, until after the battle of Waterloo. But when this fatal event occurred, it was no longer possible for me to make my way to this prince; whom I shall probably never again have the happiness of seeing.

Let us return to the year 1807. Having lost my situation with Landon, who had almost terminated his work, and finding myself reduced to the sum I received from the Institute, I should again have fallen into a state of want had it not been for the assistance of Quénescourt, one of the friends of my childhood, who easily encouraged me to entertain the hope of a better future. I have often heard myself accused of pride, in consequence of having refused the offers of many rich persons. They were mistaken. My wish has always been to accept of assistance only from the hands of friends. If, moreover, as soon as a kind of political part was marked out for me, I resisted the urgent offers of estimable men, whose attachment I could not for a moment doubt, it was because these friends had themselves filled, in the opposition, a rôle so important that the independence of the poor song-writer could not avoid being suspected, if he had agreed to place himself under any obligation to them. But I never should have repelled from mere pride the hand of

a friend, held out to assist me in the midst of my adversities. That would have rendered me, in my turn, unworthy of assisting my own unfortunate friends. I thank heaven that my spirit of order has enabled me, in the day of good fortune, often to oblige; and I never imagined that my friends had any reason to blush in accepting services that could not have bestowed so much joy on those who were the objects of them, as on myself.

Moreover, I was not the only writer of that day who, by disinterested conduct, maintained his independence. The number of those who have done so has been great, notwithstanding the calumnious statements which have been spread abroad. It has often, for example, been stated by the Press, that Thiers was under pecuniary obligations to Laffitte. The writer, who was then young, and supporting himself by his labour, has often assisted the financier. But the rigid Manuel was the arbiter of their relations; and I believe I am correct in stating, that they have never been advantageous to the writer. Thiers has always preserved an upright heart and pure hands. When he has been reproached as having been ungrateful to Laffitte, he has maintained silence; thus exhibiting a noble courage, as I am able to judge from circumstances that I know. I ought, however, to add that this unjust imputation never proceeded

from the mouth of Laffitte. On the contrary, he has often joined with me in praising the conduct of Thiers, in respect to him, since 1830.

In this notice, which I should have liked to make as succinct as possible, I am constantly ascending and descending the ladder of my life, a single word sometimes leading me to take a leap of a dozen or fifteen years. I am, therefore, frequently compelled to return to the point from whence I started. Let me now once more return to the days of my youth, and to some of its happiest moments;—a great pleasure to an old man.

The frequent journeys which I made to Peronne, to see my aunt and Quénescourt, with whom I lodged, had great influence on the almost involuntary development of my career as a song-writer. Old friends, kind relations, among others, the Forget, who were about my own age, united to offer me a fête. The pleasures of the table are the only distractions of little towns, and afford a good opportunity for amusing, by means of verses, during the time of dessert, which often lasted till midnight. I generally composed them on the spur of the moment, and several of these little songs are now contained in my published volumes. The song of the *Gueux* may be dated from this period—for we were far from being great lords. One of our most assiduous guests was the compositor

who, at a former period, had given me my first lessons in case-work at the printing office. Worthy Beaulieu! excellent man! whose many miseries were consoled by a glass of wine, and whom we took so much pleasure in consoling.

Having now arrived at that time of life, which the Greeks have called the end of the banquet, I am now desirous of recalling to mind, and repeating at my sad dessert, some of the songs of that time of joy and friendship.

We had given to our réunion the name of the Convent of the Sans-Soucis, and I composed for it these verses to the air of *Lætamini*:—

THE CONVENT OF THE SANS SOUCI.

A convent we'll restore,
  Sans Souci titled true,
Twelve brothers, and no more,
  Or six if we are few.
Let us, then, in our carouse,
Chant the order of the house.

Under our rule austere,
  Who would with us combine;
Among his brothers here
  Alone must take his wine.
    Let us then, &c.

Without crécelle or bell,
  With new refrains and gay;
To faithful souls we'll tell
  Each solemn holy-day.

Between the pears and cheese,
Great saints! we cry, together,
Preserve our vintages
From storms and frosty weather.

We'll shrive the pretty ones,
Great doctors we'll be known;
Such as a band of nuns,
Should for directors own.

Such penitents, ne'er fear,
Our sympathies can shock,
And never a brother here
Shall cast aside the frock.
Let us then, &c.

Returning to Peronne in 1809, I paid my salutations to the community in the following verses:—

AIR—*Ermite, Bon Ermite.*

To the convent see me return again,
Hail to my joyous brothers!
The world and all its chimeras vain
Rogues love, but they please no others.
God, who sets us in order good,
Out of the mud has pluckt me,
And makes my good angel,* kind of mood,
To the convent re-conduct me.

Long life to the monastery!
Where every monk is sincere;
My glass I ring with glee;
A good brother is he,
Who returns to the convent here!

Let them say at La Trappe, they choose it so,
"Brothers, we're dying daily,"
When destiny strikes us, let us know
How to bear its sufferings gaily.

* My good angel: Quénescourt.—*Note by Béranger.*

Death comes of itself—why take we care
For what may not be mended ?
To live well is the problem here,
Which with our life is ended.
Long life to the monastery ! &c.

Among all the orders I hear men cite,
Long live the Templars jolly ;
Though their holy water they keep it bright
In the depths of their cellars solely !
And they much prefer, when their drinking's done,
If wisely at all they're living,
To the songs of David, those psalms, each one
That are of Gregory's giving.
Long life to the monastery ! &c.

Brothers, the devil himself I saw,
With soft skin and charming colour,
Fine eyes, and a big insatiate maw,
Mouth to drown us all in dolour.
From his arms which burn where they embrace,
I escape, the victory bringing,
To seek in my cell, my ancient place,
And join the choir in singing.

Long life to the monastery !
Where every monk is sincere ;
My glass I ring with glee—
A good brother is he
Who returns to the convent here !

We were often under the necessity of saying farewell, and the following are some *Couplets d'adieu* :—

AIR : *On ne sait comment faire.*

Friends, in our contests of mirth,
Let all vain regrets breathe away ;

If we're travellers here upon earth,
We shall still meet another day.

Gray friars, *au revoir* I sing,
At Paris, a pleasant hope said;
Together our glasses we'll ring,
I go, then, the table to spread.

Between love and friendship the road,
With small preparations I take;
And the most of my knapsack's light load,
Of the charms of remembrance I make.

We are young: can we, then, tire our foot?
On all breezes our soul travels wide;
Soft notes of a magical flute
Time the footsteps, of which Hope is guide.

By post or a-foot if we go,
Without doubt, we still seek the same end;
Happy he at both sides who can know,
He will meet the warm heart of a friend.

The following is another song on departure:—

AIR: *Comme ça vient, comme ça passe.*

Adieu, merry hearts!
Use this day—on his track,
Time flies!—when one parts,
'Tis to hasten him back.

I quit the Inn, where
Tired of wandering astray,
Upon life's path of care,
Friendship led me one day.

"Joy, sweet cheat, flies always,"
Says the old man—"not so,"
We retort. "Pleasure stays,
It is we who must go."

At the board we assemble,
What! this bumper's spilled;
Because friendship's hands tremble,
My passport is filled.

If, in travelling, I stray
Past the grief of these hours;
Ah, friends! follow my way,
With an odour of flowers.

Adieu, merry hearts!
Use this day—on his track,
Time flies!—when one parts,
'Tis to hasten him back.

I was at Peronne on the occasion of the great festival of printers, termed the Fête Saint Jean Porte-Latine. I accompanied the workmen when they proceeded to present a bouquet to old père Laisney, my former master. Decked in a paper cap and apron, I sang the following to him and his wife:—

My master, my toilette is made,
In bonnet and apron complete;
I must sing where this dinner is laid,
The old labourer's privilege meet.

Friendship inspires us,
Friends, 'tis her dart;
What she prints, she requires us,
To print on the heart!

While we work at these types, each man,
Take the composing rod, sages!
For without a corrector we can
Set up, crowned by the press, these pages.

Saint Jean, where we go for our wine,
Recalls me to thoughts of my case;

Of this art which makes glory divine,
Is he less than a father of grace?
Friendship inspires us, &c.

These little songs bring back some happy recollections, and speak to me of friends, many of whom—alas! have gone before me to the tomb. I composed also several lighter trifles, which made a great noise in the country. One of them nearly got me into trouble.

Peronne had, at that time, and, perhaps, still has, a company of archers. I was in the town on one occasion, when these gentlemen were shooting at a jay, a bird of painted wood, perched on the end of a pole fifty feet high. They had made the attempt twice, without bringing down the bird. I hastily put together a kind of vaudeville, which, increased by some twenty epigrams, more cutting than witty, soon makes its way, from mouth to mouth, to the address of each of the unskilful archers. The scandal was great; and Piron scarcely caused less at Beaune by an act of imprudence of a very similar nature. If I had not quickly quitted the country, some misadventure might probably have occurred to me. With ministers, and even with kings, one may escape with prison and a heavy fine; but our chevaliers of the bow did not appear as if so little would satisfy them. But the good Picards are as easily calmed as they are excited; they forgave my act of folly, at

which they soon laughed themselves; and I could safely return to sing my songs in this town—the recollection of which is dear to me on so many grounds. The following is the song in which I celebrated my return:

In these quarters, at my wit,
The simpletons rage and frown;
Can I sing and in quiet sit
When the fools are against it?

Din, din, din, din, din, din, din,
Against me they raise the town;
Din, din, din, din, din, din, din,
They are going to sound the tocsin.

These outraged archers gay
To shoot me they all intend;
I am in fear you well may say,
For I am bigger than a jay.

Din, din, din, din, din, din, din,
Do you hear their small bell,* friend?
Din, din, din, din, din, din, din,
Upon me they sound the tocsin.

To heal these fools with power,
Piron's story, I think, is one;
Bigots, knaves, and pedants, lower,
To the wits they're always sour.

Din, din, din, din, din, din, din,
Whether in Beaune or Peronne;
Din, din, din, din, din, din, din,
They are always sounding the tocsin.

But you who have helped me, friends,
My brothers who prop me about,
I have something to make amends,
Which to flight your *ennui* sends.

* In the sport of archery, a small bell (*une sonn ette*) announces each stroke.—*Note by Béranger.*

Din, din, din, din, din, din, din,
Gaily with glass and with shout,
Din, din, din, din, din, din, din,
Upon them, we'll sound the tocsin.

My readers will, perhaps, be curious to see the life which I led, as a young man, under another aspect. In addition to the songs inspired by pleasure, and the gayest of which, now that I have become wise, I dare not introduce, I was also inspired by fits of melancholy to the composition of such verses as the following:—

AURORA.*

Of the days of my spring, oh thou sweet last morning,
Thou fliest; spring passes away;
And still I ask hopeless, to see thee returning,
Why have I beheld this day?

'Neath thy sweet fruitful tears, dews that shine on the roses,
How the young flowers open sweet!
But thou drainest the cup, when the dew-drop reposes,
And straightway they die at thy feet!

Little birds, one month sees you born and gay singing,
Safe from the fowler's snares;
Yet perhaps to your chants, as to mine, time is bringing,
An echo of troubles and cares.

For each suffering creature who cries, his rest breaking,
A poor prop a man can make;
For he finds all his ills, when at morning awaking,
Before him astir and awake.

* This ode has been accidentally preserved from the flames, which have devoured so many of its melancholy sisters.—*Note by Béranger.*

By twice twelve summers, a tree drained and sapless,
Must I droop, thus faded and worn?
Shall the sun rise no more for me, fallen and hapless;
Nor sweet nature smile to the morn?

The time which has trained me, has placed a hand, shading
Over my eyes in its flight;
And this cruel To-day so quickly is fading;
I see myself old by its light.

Thus the traveller, at night, with no friend his way guiding,
While the shadows are closing around,
On the slope of a precipice finds his steps sliding
Deep into a chasm profound.

Old age with dull eyes, and cold rigour, where lingers
A palsy for thoughts and for art,
Comes towards me, alas! and has raised her ice-fingers
To lay a chill grasp on my heart.

Thou, bright sun, who wak'st, in the depth of the forest,
Wild animals out of their den;
On the couches of mortals, the more light thou pourest,
Their ills show but greater to men.

Fly, visions of love, all our dawn thus adorning,
With hope's rosy tints and gay;
I would I had seen of my years but one morning,
But the morning of one day!

I have allowed myself to indulge in many recollections of my youth, and in a multitude of citations; let me now return to the events of my life.*

* We have collected and placed at the end of the volume some of Béranger's oldest pieces, in the form in which they were published in the literary journals of the day.—*Note by the Editor.*

When I was at length on the point of obtaining settled employment, I had the misfortune to lose my father. He was struck with apoplexy at fifty-nine years of age, at the very time when I indulged the hope of being able to procure some happier days for him. Soon afterwards, my sister and my mother's sister entered into a convent. I gave expression to many sage reflections in reference to the course which, at twenty-two years of age, Sophie appeared desirous of taking. I imagined that her determination proceeded only from the fear of becoming one day a burden to me. But she persisted; and neither she nor her old aunt have ever had occasion to do otherwise than applaud the step they then took. In the cloister they have found a state of security and repose, which they could have found only with difficulty in the world.

On the formation of the Imperial University, Arnault obtained a place for me in one of the bureaux. He presented me to the Grand Master, Fontanes, an ancient dependant of M. Lucien. Fontanes did not bestow any more attention on the poor devil who had been recommended to him, because Arnault had pronounced an eulogium on my literary essays. They appeared at first disposed to allow me to take my choice of appointments with salaries of two or three thousand francs. The inferior appointment of *Ex-*

péditionnaire requiring, as is well known, little mental occupation, appeared to me the one best suited to a rhymer, and I gave it the preference. In that I was wrong; for with three thousand francs I might have been more useful to my friends. But I was yet unable to consider my duty before my inclination. The consequence was, that M. de Fontanes, seeing how little importance I attributed to great emoluments, in spite of the urgent request of Arnault, was so far from fulfilling his promise, that he bestowed on me a place worth only one thousand francs. He had not one of less value to give. This did not cause me much concern, even though it required eight or nine years to rise by a course of gradual increase to the two thousand francs promised at first. When I had become so rich, M. de Fontanes had long ceased to be the Grand Master.

I was scarcely assured of this employment, when a new burden was imposed on me by Providence. I accepted it, like every other which it had sent. I could see in the latter consolations for my old age; but it was not so, and I still support it without compensation and without murmur. It is a strange circumstance that I who, from an early period of my life, foreseeing the uncertainty of my career, avoided all engagements that might have increased the weight of the poor pilgrim's baggage, have always seen myself loaded

with sufficiently heavy burdens. My trust in God has sustained me; and it is no fault of mine, if those in whose fate I am interested have been unable to derive any advantage from the privations I have imposed on myself, in order to spare them the difficulty of the road I have traversed. I often grieve on account of it; but what heart has not its sore? The old soldier has always some old wound remaining, which threatens to break out again. For all my happiness, it is certainly true, I have above all things desired the welfare of others, at least of those around me. My prayers are far from having been heard.

In spite of some follies of youth, and of the thorns that misery always leaves in the flesh of those who have crossed its path, from this moment my life begins to assume a more regular impulse. I was passing from a period of life which is very critical, especially to men whose intelligence has been spontaneously developed. Between the age of twenty and thirty, a combat rises in their breast between imagination, exalted by the senses, and reason, enlightened by the dawning of experience—a combat in which the latter does not always triumph. Whatever may be the issue of it, the field of battle is always profoundly stirred up. In me the struggle was as painful as it was long, and I sometimes thought I was about to fall into madness. Reason at length gained the

victory. My spirit soon became more serene. The fits of melancholy disappeared. I saw men as they are, and indulgence towards them began to pervade all my thoughts. After this time, my gaiety, which had been unequal and boisterous, became calm and sustained—and never abandoned me, except on rare occasions in the midst of society. It was always my companion in retreat and in the company of my friends, whom it often consoled, justifying me in the remark that *it was never offensive to sorrow.*

At the same time, I also made the greatest efforts to render my style more perfect. Ideas, good or bad, have seldom failed me; but I had not so judicious a choice of expression. When one has only himself for master, the course of study is generally long. I acquired a habit of brooding long over my thoughts, in order to seize them in the most favourable aspect, as they came to light. I said to myself that every subject must necessarily have its own grammar, dictionary, and even its peculiar manner of being expressed in rhyme,—that, for example, which is of an elegiac nature, not requiring the same precision of rhyme. I dwell on these details only for the benefit of those who suppose that, in order to write well, it is merely necessary to let words fall by chance upon the paper, and who take into consideration neither the necessary reflection nor preparatory reading. If things

go on in that way, you will soon see some who will be able to write before they are acquainted with the art of reading. There are assuredly some privileged men of genius, who succeed without trouble in every thing. But who is entitled to believe himself a genius?

The corrections which I made in my pastoral poem—a sketch remaining unfinished—revealed to me a greater number of the secrets of our language than any other labour which I undertook. I had composed odes and dithyrambs; but I soon perceived that these styles of poetry—exotic plants transplanted from antiquity into our soil—had no profound root in it, notwithstanding all the merit of our great lyric writers. I do not venture to say that I reason correctly, but it appears to me that the ode, as we employ it, borders on the emphatic—that is to say, almost on the false; and nothing is more opposed to the French mind, to which the simple is one of the necessary elements of the sublime—as the eloquence of Bossuet, and the finest passages of Corneille, fully attest. Pindar, who, perhaps, is perfectly comprehended by very few, is often cited; but how great is the difference between the modern poets and the Greek lyric bard! who, fulfilling in truth the office of a true priesthood, celebrated, in the presence of the twenty sister populations assembled at Olympia, his native country, its heroes and its gods; and, sur-

rounded by a chorus of dance and song, declaimed his verses in a voice sustained by the aid of music. With us, the poet almost invariably occupies a position external to his work, as regarded by critical readers; a fact which ought to make him feel the necessity of having, as it were, a framework for all his subjects. It is by the invention of such a framework that his genius should be most strikingly displayed, and not by a deluge of verses—doubtless, always beautiful, but which make us think of that princess of the fairy tale, whose mouth never opened without pouring forth torrents of pearls, of rubies, and of emeralds: poor princess!

If I fall here into some literary heresy, I hope our academicians, who are all so profound in Latin and Greek, will have the goodness to forgive me. It is, at all events, the fact, that I burnt as many odes as would fill a small volume, all very emphatic, and on which I had founded some foolish hopes. It has been said that nothing so enlightens as the flame of the manuscript which is committed to the fire. In that case, I ought to see very clearly. I have known authors who never destroyed any of the verses that they composed. I have not preserved more than a quarter of mine; and I am conscious to-day that I have kept too many of them.

It ought now to be understood, after what I have

said, how great was the objection I always felt when persons, with the intention of praising my songs, have honoured them by calling them *odes*. It is a hard task to get rid of all the aristocracies; and that of styles in literature has not yet ceased to prevail among us, notwithstanding the powerful efforts made by what is termed the romantic school. In this respect, and in many others, I owe it some gratitude. That verse of the *master*, who disdained to allow fable a place in his *Art Poétique*:—

" Il faut, même en chansons, du bon sens et de l'art,"

has continued to be, in the estimation of many, the highest appreciation of that style to which I finally resolved to dedicate all my time and care; and hence the name of ode given to such of my songs as they believed to belong to a superior style, notwithstanding the really synonymous nature of the two words. I have it from Rouget de Lisle himself, that he was displeased when the *Marseillaise* was termed a song. In making these reflections I hope no other wrong will be attributed to me than that of defending a personal interest. That is a reproach which I must make up my mind to brave, in the interest of a style of poetry to which I owe so great a debt of gratitude.

I now come to the year 1813, which marks the be-

ginning of my reputation—just when I was on the point of resigning myself to the fate of never having any.

In the midst of so many other labours, it has been seen that I always composed songs. Through an act of indiscretion, on my father's part, several of those, which had been composed only for the purpose of amusing our little circle of friends, were printed in one of the numerous collections which then encumbered the shelves of the circulating libraries. They found their way into it entirely unnoticed; and they deserved no better fate. But at length some of the MS. copies of the *Sénateur*, the *Petit Homme Gris*, the *Gueux*, and, especially the *Roi d'Yvetot*, made known my name to the admirers of this style, always so numerous in France. Some were printed; but the last, which was circulated only in manuscript, excited particular attention. An exceedingly moderate criticism of the Imperial Government, when *mutism* was the order of the day, it had the good fortune to see the police on its traces. The labour of the verse, the precision of the rhyme, did not prevent its being at first attributed to certain men of the world of a high position—a circumstance which induced me to request my friends, and Arnault especially, to make the name of the author known to those who, according to their own statement, were employed to discover him. It has been several times

asserted that this song exposed me to persecution. There is no truth in the statement. I have reason, however, for believing that it was brought under the eye of the Emperor.*

Many of my joyous refrains were also current in the world; they had so much the more success because they resembled the songs of Collé, whose works M. Auger, the royal censor, ordered to be reprinted at the beginning of the Restoration. These choruses were not composed with the view of publication. But the friends, for whom alone they were intended, saw no inconvenience in distributing a few copies of them. These verses were, fortunately, no more the painting of their manners than of mine; but I confess that my principles were not quite conformable with those which the higher ranks of society, into several of whose salons I was about to be drawn, adopted. In order to brave the hypocrisy of some of its laws, I was of a ripe age, had fixed ideas, and a character tried by misfortune. These protected me

* Will it be believed that a short time ago several of those who recently maligned the Emperor Napoleon, thought proper to reproach me with having attacked this great man, at the moment of his fall, in the song of the *King of Yvetot*. They pretended to forget that it was current several months before the victories of Lutzen and Bautzen; which these gentlemen would, doubtless, have celebrated, if they had then been able to hold my pen.

from the perils to which youthful talent is exposed in the higher ranks, where its force and originality are too often destroyed. How many noble thoughts—how many generous designs have been brought to naught by the effect of the air which is breathed in those places where luxury and fashion reign! Do not, however, accuse of treachery those who introduce or receive you into this society. Their kindness entertains no suspicion of the evil they are about to inflict. Do not suffer yourself to be transplanted into gilded saloons. They will soon separate you from the friends of your infancy and youth, who have not been able to rise so high as you, and to whom you probably owe a portion of your vigour. Already a man of experience, I kept fast hold of my cradle and the friends of my infancy. How often, also, after being present at sumptuous banquets, in the midst of new acquaintances, I have gone to dine the following day in a back shop or a garret, in order to re-temper myself among the companions of my poverty. Had I only done so in the interest of the free language which I desired to speak, there would have been wisdom in such conduct on my part! I also profited there, by not remaining a stranger to the inferior classes, for whom I was bound to sing; and to whose amelioration I should have been glad to have been able to contribute.

Although the society of the rich has destroyed far more genius than it ever aided to develop, there are, nevertheless, some kinds of intellect to whom a knowledge of it is necessary. To pass through it was, as it were, a journey for me; it was my voyage round the world. After having accomplished it, when I had reached fifty years of age, I quitted this sphere of society without regret; although my visit to it was neither without pleasure nor fruit. I owe, indeed, to this peregrination both excellent friends and happy recollections. I am also indebted to it for the knowledge, that there are as many noble and good hearts in the higher, as in the other classes. In the higher, unfortunately, virtue is too frequently the slave of custom, of idleness, of all the demands of luxury, and of all the bad ideas which are the common property of every limited and reserved circle.

In 1813, there had existed for several years a reunion of song-writers and of *littérateurs*—which had assumed the name of the *Caveau*, in memory of the cellar rendered illustrious by Piron, Panard, Collé, Gallet, and the Crébillons, father and son. On the death of the old Laujon, Désaugiers had been called to preside over this society—the songs of which contrasted so singularly with the misfortunes with which France was at that time threatened. I never had any inclination for these literary associations; and the

idea of becoming a member of one of them would never have occurred to me. Chance, however, decided that I should become a member of this one. Désaugiers had an opportunity of seeing some of my verses, and became desirous of making my acquaintance. Arnault and the Comte Regnaud de Saint-Jean-d' Angély made arrangements, without my knowledge, for a dinner with the brother of Marshal Suchet; and Arnault, who dreaded my aversion to society, conducted me there, under the pretext that he was taking me to the *restaurateur*, where Désaugiers was waiting for me.

An intimacy was soon established between us; and by the time of dessert he addressed me in the most familiar terms. My natural reserve would, perhaps, have been wounded by this in the society of any other; but my habit of judging of people at the first glance could not but lead me to form a high opinion of this excellent man, whose appearance was so gay and attractive. I felt at once a true regard for him; and did not resist the urgent requests he made, that I should dine at least once a week at the *Caveau* with all his colleagues, whom I knew only by name. I proceeded there on the day appointed, and sang many of my songs. Every one appeared astonished that, rich as I was in productions of this nature, I had never thought of publishing them. "He must be one of us!" was the cry of all. In order to ob-

serve the rules, which forbade the nomination of a candidate who was present, I was concealed behind a door, with a biscuit and a glass of champagne in my hand. I improvised some verses, expressive of my gratitude for my unanimous election, which, amid the noise of joyous bumpers, was confirmed by a general embrace of welcome.

The old Chevalier de Piis, a member of the *Caveau*, who was not present at this dinner, protested against my election. The smallest reputations are regarded with jealousy by some. Is it on that account that they inspire as much pride even as the great? Piis had been a man of true talent, and possessed of great wit; but, in his disposition, he bore no resemblance to Désaugiers, and revenged himself on rising reputations for the loss of his own—a wrong, which is very common with literary invalids. So when the song of the *Bon Dieu* acquired some renown, at a later period, he wrote a reply to it, which was inserted in the official journals, and presented to Louis XVIII. This prince, who had a good memory, must have laughed heartily on seeing this new recantation of a man, who, formerly a dependent of the Comte d' Artois, had sung the praises of all the revolutionary powers in their turn, even the *bris des cloches* and the virtues of Marat. Having fallen into a state of destitution at the Restoration, Piis was anxious to obtain a pension, in which, unfor-

tunately, he was unsuccessful. He was certainly not a bad man; and if he abused the authority which, under the Empire, his position as General Secretary of the Prefecture of Police gave him, he only did so when he sent a complete copy of his works to a considerable number of persons. Who would have dared to refuse the acceptance and payment of eight volumes in octavo? He had employed some gendarmes to make this distribution from house to house. Let us pity the author who requires such booksellers, especially when he has survived a reputation which once had some *éclat*.

Notwithstanding my prejudice against associations more or less literary in their character, I was deeply touched by the kindness and applause with which I was welcomed to the *Caveau*. From that day, my reputation as a song-writer spread in Paris, and throughout all France. I could not, however, long continue under any illusion with regard to the inconveniences of a reunion of men devoted to a life so different in all respects from the habits of mine, however great might be the literary merit and the personal qualities of many of them. The wit of the *coulisses*, and the interests of the theatre, formed the principal theme of their conversation, which was not always exempt from the bitterness to which rivalry gives birth. I have liked the pleasures of the table, for the effusion of heart which they produce, and the

witty sallies which they prompt; but I have always found the want, in these pleasures, of some grain of philosophy, and especially of the charm of the affections. I was out of my place at the modern Caveau. The ancient, so much boasted of by our fathers, was, doubtless, no better in this respect. The associations which profess to be merry are seldom gay.

Armand Gouffé, who sought my friendship with much kindness, had once presided over the Caveau, but had left it, as it was said, in consequence of his jealousy of the success of Désaugiers, whom he had introduced to it. He was certainly not the man to amuse this reunion; but he was at all events one of the most witty and expert versifiers. His style, which was that of Panard, cannot be considered the same as that of the song, but rather the vaudeville, in which the author proceeds by couplets connected by some proverb, or even by the repetition of some word in the chorus. In this style, Gouffé maintains an undoubted superiority; and he is the man who, in our times, certainly paid the most attention to the correctness of his verses and the richness of the rhyme, too much neglected since the age of Louis XIV. It is a singular fact that, in France, the song-writers laboured most to restore the use of rhyme to its full honours; and from a very early period, I myself coupled my rhymes with the greatest care. The new

school, doubtless, does not require this example; but it does not the less allow that I preceded it in one of these most useful improvements.

When the last convulsions of the Empire, and especially the *Hundred Days* occurred, the diversity of opinions was not long in sowing misunderstandings in our society, as in all France, and my patriotism could not long accommodate itself to what I heard and saw in our dinners. I abandoned them, therefore. In order to lead me to this step, the following little adventure, which I shall relate, would have been quite sufficient.

Being invited one day by a letter from Baleine, the famous *restaurateur* of the *Rocher de Cancale*, to a family dinner, and supposing that he wished to thank me in this manner for the care I had taken, as secretary of the Caveau, in the settlement of all our accounts with him, I proceeded there at the hour appointed. I was conducted into one of the private apartments, where I found Désaugiers, Gentil, and several others, whom I did not know. Astonished to see that they seated themselves at table without waiting for Baleine, a suspicion seized me; I quitted the dinner-table, and hastened to declare to our amphytrion, that if he did not immediately come and take his place, I should desert the other guests. He was compelled to abandon his ovens, and to take his place at the table, at which Désaugiers could not help

smiling. When the dinner was over, he lost no time in making me acquainted with the usages of our *restaurant*. They ordered a repast some days beforehand, indicating on the card which of the members of the Caveau they wished to be present—just as they order a *dinde truffée* and a rare fish. The nature of the song, the true amusement of the dessert, led the most distinguished among us to enact this degrading part. Thus Désaugiers, who, I am sure only acted so in imitation, turned into ridicule what he called my prudery. "If you only knew," he said, "who complain of not being often enough invited! you are ungrateful! But for you, Baleine might have served up a dinner not quite so sour, and more than one of our brotherhood will reproach him for it to-night."

I concluded by laughing at the adventure; but it was a useful lesson for me and for Baleine also, for he never again thought of making me serve his ends.

Alas! it was soon necessary for me to separate from Désaugiers, whose talent I very much admired, and to whom I was greatly attached. Of too feeble a character not to be the plaything of the intriguers with whom he associated, as soon as he was appointed Director of the Vaudeville, by ministerial favour, he made such a display of political fanaticism, as, in one of his careless disposition and natural kindness, was inexplicable. His character was not adapted for such

an occupation. His royalism had not separated us, and I celebrated his appointment to the direction with sincere pleasure; but when he proceeded so far as to attack those who had been his friends under the Empire, by the song which he made on the subject of *Germanicus*, whatever regret it cost me, I discontinued to see him; and I must acknowledge, that when we occasionally met, he always manifested his regret at it. Some wished to persuade him that the song of *Paillasse* was directed against him; he made a very feeble reply to it; and afterwards, inspired by a better feeling, meeting me at his theatre, he said to me, "No; it was not me that you attacked; I did not change my party during the *Hundred Days*." They succeeded, however, at this time in making him do much worse. They incited him to insult the misfortunes of France, by a song entitled the *Règne d'un Terme ou le Terme d'un Règne*.

I was, indeed, far from thinking of him when I composed my *Paillasse*. I never attacked any but those who were in high places, and in a position to avenge themselves. I should have blushed to direct my pen against brethren who inconsiderately threw themselves in the path of recantation, especially when I had formerly rejoiced in their friendship. A song, of which each couplet was a bitter and wittily expressed epigram, was circulated against Désaugiers, when

Louis XVIII. presented him with a silver *soupière*. I was aware that it was attributed to me (for I have been made answerable for songs of all kinds); and I wrote to him to assure him that I scarcely even knew it!* His answer was the following: "However great may be the talent and the spirit of these couplets, they proceed from a bad heart; you may, therefore, conclude that I never believed you to be the author of them. I shall now tell you his name, if you have not yet divined it."

* The following is the song alluded to:—

AIR: *Rendez moi mon écuelle de bois!*

As-tu vu mon écuelle d'argent,
As-tu vu mon écuelle?
Dit Buteux en se rengorgeant;
Ah! qu'elle est large! ah! qu'elle est belle!
As-tu vu mon écuelle d'argent,
As-tu vu mon écuelle?

D'où te vient cette écuelle d'argent,
D'où te vient cette écuelle?
Chez le czar ou chez le régent
As-tu fait le polichinelle?
D'où te vient cette écuelle d'argent,
D'où te vient cette écuelle?

D'où te vient cette écuelle d'argent,
D'où te vient cette écuelle?
De Paris Regnaud délogeant
A-t-il oublié sa vaisselle?
D'où te vient, etc.

D'où te vient cette écuelle d'argent,
D'où te vient cette écuelle?
Bonaparte, esclave indigent,
N'a plus de quoi payer ton zèle.
D'où te vient, etc.

It affords me great pleasure to look back upon my relations with this man, who was of such an amiable character; and I have often regretted the necessity of dissolving those relations, which, perhaps, would not have been altogether useless to him. Désaugiers, who was so gay in society, and especially at table, where he truly reigned, could not support isolation even for the shortest period. That is the reason to which we

D'où te vient cette écuelle d'argent.
D'où te vient cette écuelle ?
A ses amis Arnault songeant,
Te l'envoya-t-il de Bruxelles ?
D'où te vient, etc.

Je la tiens, cette écuelle d'argent,
Je la tiens, cette écuelle,
D'un roi trop bon, trop indulgent,
Qui prend des chansons pour du zèle ;
Je la tiens, cette écuelle d'argent.

" Qu'on lui donne une écuelle d'argent,
Qu'on lui donne une écuelle,
Dit le prince, puisqu'en mangeant
Pour chacun sa verve étincelle.
Qu'on lui donne," etc.

Il aurait cent écuelles d'argent,
Il aurait cent écuelles,
Si l'on en gagnait en changeant
De héros, d'amis et de belles ;
Il aurait cent écuelles d'argent,
Il aurait cent écuelles.

Editor's Note.

must attribute the ascendancy, which others so easily gained over him. "What! you can remain alone," he said to me, one day, "In solitude I should die of *ennui* and exhaustion. I am called the joyous Désaugiers; very well! in reality there is a vein of sadness in my character." The truth of these words was confirmed by Gentil, one of the friends of his childhood. If, indeed, his gaiety was only a part played to amuse himself, it may be affirmed, that there never was a more perfect actor than Désaugiers.

I do not wish to enter into any political discussion here; I have elsewhere spoken of the painful impression which the two invasions, to which France was compelled to submit, had produced on me. My songs, if they outlive me, will abundantly prove it. At all events, as that which takes place in the street is often the point from which the song-writer takes his departure, I wish to relate some facts of which I have either been a witness myself, or which witnesses on whom I can depend have related to me. History is too much given to the neglect of little details; and we render a service to it, by preserving the memory even of those which are apparently insignificant. In them may be found the expression of the people's thought—which is too much despised by history. It is a bad habit to represent each epoch by the reunion of certain figures, which writers beautify or deface,

according to their fancy, and to which, style serves as a pedestal.

In 1814, I dwelt in a house near the *barriére Rochechouart*—which, on the 30th of March, was saluted by several mortars. Judging by what I knew of the paucity of the preparations made for our defence, I thought that my chamber might, during the day, be invaded by the enemy.* It was almost a military position. My window commanded Paris and its environs. After a cannonade, to which there was no serious opposition, except in the direction of Ménil-montant, where the combat was long and bloody, and where the pupils of the Polytechnic School and of the School of Saint Cyr, conducted themselves like heroes, I observed towards five o'clock, the arrival of a column of cavalry on the eminence of Montmartre, from the direction of and by the declivity of Clichy. They were hussars; they mounted slowly; were they ours? Having arrived near the mills, while, by the aid of my glass, I followed them step by step, under the influence of a painful anxiety, I observed that the heads of their horses were turned towards Paris. Great God! it is the enemy! He is now master of the heights so badly

* Rue de Bellefonds, in the ancient château of the famous Comte de Charolais, then transformed into a boarding school for the middle classes.—*Note by Béranger.*

defended. The noise of the musketry and artillery soon ceased; my alarm increased, and I went down to the street to learn the news. Through the crowd of wounded men whom they are carrying in, and the waggons driven in confusion, I ran to the Boulevards, and there I found that my sad presentiment was but too true. I was informed that a capitulation had just been signed by the aids-de-camp only of the Duke of Ragusa. This marshal, who had long been trafficked with by the Bourbon conspirators (a fact of which I am sure), after having acted in a manner worthy of praise during the continuance of the combat, dared, at a later period, to give the signal of defection.

The population of working men crowded behind the line of defence, which I had been anxious to see in the morning, depended throughout the day on the arrival of the Emperor, who was only a few leagues distant. They were prepared for the spectacle of a victory. When they perceived at a distance on the plain a general on a white horse, followed by some officers, "Behold him! behold him!" exclaimed the crowd, which could not admit even as a supposition the possibility of danger to Paris. On the news of the capitulation, nothing could equal the amazement and rage of this courageous multitude, which has the taste and the instinct for battle; and which, during the whole day, had never ceased to pray for arms, which they took

care not to grant them. I also—I had in vain gone to solicit a musket from those whose duty, it was said, it was to distribute them.

It has always appeared to me that I should have been brave that day. Assuredly there are at least things which I would not have done. To yield to perfidious insinuations; to extend the hand to the enemies of our country; to sign a capitulation which they could have retarded for two days at least, merely by refusing to allow the entrance of the hostile army, which was too feeble to encounter the risk of entering so populous a town; these are things they never could have obtained from me, even if they had menaced me with the most cruel death. But they had satisfied the exigencies of tactics and of strategy. The cannons had discharged as many shots as they ought to discharge in a single day. The people were counted for nothing. Military honour was satisfied; and men, celebrated for their bravery, did not hesitate to sign the capitulation of the capital; that is to say, the subjection of their country!

Being no longer able to entertain any doubt regarding this capitulation, I passed a miserable night in my wretched garret, so near to the camp of the enemy. All these soldiers, whether barbarians or civilized, some of whom had perhaps seen the Great Wall of China, appeared to repose only in the joy of

their triumph. Until the dawn of day, nothing could be heard but the noise of strange *farandoles*, and of savage cries, mingled with the trumpets of the Germans, the Cossacks, and the Bashkirs. I could see the illuminations which they prepared to our shame on this Montmartre, where so often, in the last rays of a beautiful setting sun, I had gone to dream over the picture of Paris, extended at my feet.

At an early hour in the morning I proceed in search of information, and by the proclamations, which have been put up during the night, I learn that there is no longer any hope, and that the entry of those who are thenceforward to be called the allies is to take place in a few hours. Little printed notices, without signature, are still scattered among the crowd, to encourage it to resist. Vain protestation! The Emperor had so encouraged the people to believe only in himself that his voice alone could have dissipated all uncertainty at that hour—alone could have again inspired courage, and above all, have given it a useful direction. Completely convinced of the reality of our misfortune, I determined to return to my own house in order to conceal myself, having no desire to see any part of that spectacle by which Paris was about to be dishonoured. But how great was my surprise on meeting several individuals with white cockades in the midst of the

groups that lined the boulevards. One drunken man cried out close to me, "*Vivent les Bourbons.*" The crowd did not appear at all to comprehend these first royalist demonstrations, which, however, had already been made, on a greater scale, by a brilliant cavalcade, led by the Duclos, the Maubrueil; by dukes, marquises, and counts of ancient race; and by some intriguers, who were eagerly hastening to obtain their share of the booty.

It is known that the entrance of the Russians and Germans was made with greater courtesy than conquerors generally show on such occasions. Our enemies appeared to present themselves with reverence in the city of Clovis, of Saint Louis, of Henry IV., of Louis XIV., and of Napoleon; in this city of the Constituent Assembly, and of the Convention, where the great and holy cause of European democracy has, for so many ages, been gradually accomplishing its task with incessant activity. The princes, doubtless, recollected all the obligations that the civilization of their people and the spirit of their courts owed to us. Almost all the officers of this numerous army spoke the language of the conquered, and even appeared to know no other, except when it was necessary to repress the rare acts of brutality of some of their soldiers. From the balconies, a thousand or twelve hundred adherents of the Bourbons (I am assured

that I exaggerate their numbers by one half), men and women, those of noble race, and such as were ambitious of being ennobled, returned politeness for politeness to the conquerors. Several even approached, and threw themselves down at the feet of the chiefs, kissing their dusty boots; whilst from the windows, the waving of white handkerchiefs, the cries of enthusiasm, and noisy benedictions, saluted this army as it filed along, quite astonished at the magnitude of its own triumph. Thus, a base troop of Frenchmen trod under foot the trophies of our last twenty-five years of glory, in the presence of foreigners, who, by their aspect, proved that they still retained a profound recollection of them.

Seized at first with patriotic indignation, the class of working men was for a long time unable to account to itself for so unexpected a change. As this class, more than any other, felt the necessity of peace, this was the only word which could produce amongst them conversions favourable to the new *régime*, which they were preparing for us with M. de Talleyrand. This able man, as well as the Emperor Alexander, attached himself to the Bourbons of the elder branch, only because he no longer had Napoleon to deal with. A judgment may be formed of the difference of the sentiments which animated the

people and the royalists, by the following two facts which took place under my own eyes.

The day after the entrance of the foreigners into Paris, a hundred of our soldiers who had been made prisoners within the walls, were conducted along streets inhabited by workmen, by a detachment of Germans. The workmen, observing that some of the French soldiers were wounded and covered with blood, thought at first that they were conducting them to the hospitals. But being informed that it was to the état-major of the enemy, encamped in the Champs-Elysées, that they were being led, they gave utterance to loud shouts, and were preparing to effect the deliverance of these unfortunate remains of our defenders, when either by chance or prudence the chiefs of the escort led it into the boulevards, where fervent royalists were stationed to stimulate their agents. I was there. At the sight of our poor soldiers—prisoners, suffering, mutilated—*vivats* are raised by the group of Bourbonians. Fine gentlemen and beautiful ladies appear at the windows to applaud the foreign soldiers, and not to fail in the execution of their part in such an act of infamy. Not only was the country insulted, but humanity itself!

A spectacle, no less shameful, but less sad, struck me on the Place Vendôme, where several of the royalists, of whom I have just spoken, endeavoured to throw

down from the summit of the column the statue of the Emperor, which they had intentionally loosened at its base. Horses and men attached to long ropes, used their greatest exertions to drag down this immense figure, which remained immoveable, and which the leaders of the party were anxious to see broken in pieces on the pavement of the place. Notwithstanding the terror and surprise which still paralyzed the crowd, the sentiment excited by the outrages levelled at the soldier of the Revolution, produced at first deep murmurs, but afterwards found vent in long peals of laughter at each unsuccessful effort attempted by the new *iconoclasts*. They were obliged to withdraw without having accomplished their task of destruction.

I do not suppose that any one will be inclined to infer from what I have related that such was the conduct of all the legitimists, nobles, and rich individuals of Paris. The hôtels also have had their patriotism, and no parties, doubtless, were without their own virtues.

It was a remarkable circumstance that the capitulation of Paris in no way disturbed the ordinary life of the inhabitants. On the morning of the attack, the various theatrical spectacles were announced as usual, and if the representations did not take place in the evening, I am inclined to believe it was solely because both the comedians and the *bourgeoisie* were anxious

to see and to know all that was going to take place. The entrance of the foreigners was another kind of distraction which many, whose patriotism was more doubtful than my own, eagerly ran to see. If they were reproached for their curiosity, "What could we do in the circumstances?" they answered. "Why did the Emperor not arrive in time? Why have Marie-Louise and Joseph abandoned us?"

If the Emperor, moreover, had then been able to read the impressions of all minds, he would, doubtless, have recognized one of his greatest faults; one of those which the nature of his genius led him to commit. He had silenced the Press; deprived the people of all free intervention in the affairs of the country; and had thus completely effaced the principles which our revolution had inculcated upon us. The result had been that profound slumber even of the sentiments which are the most natural to us. The good fortune of the Emperor was for a long time more thought of among us than patriotism; but as he had absorbed the whole nation unto himself, the whole nation fell along with him; and in our fall, we were unable to show ourselves to the enemy in any other character than that which he had impressed upon us. Nevertheless, let us say in his praise, that in this solemn moment, he alone, apart from the general body of the people, was a true

patriot, as his desire to fight it out to the last grain of powder, and his readiness to abdicate, sufficiently prove. He alone? No; there was another, one of our ancient supreme chiefs; an able warrior; an old and disinterested republican; a forsaken *proscrit*, to whom Napoleon rendered justice when it was too late, and who, seeing France in danger, listened neither to the suggestions of his just resentment, nor even to his opinions—a duty which, in such circumstances, implies the highest virtue. It is almost useless to remark that I speak of the illustrious Carnot, who demanded permission to go and fight, and who saved Antwerp from destruction, whilst we suffered the capitulation of our capital, under the walls of which Napoleon was approaching to crush our enemies.

In speaking of my early years, I have remarked that my patriotism had still, notwithstanding my sixty years, all the ardour of my youth. It will, perhaps, be considered that I give too plain a proof of this in the expression of the facts which precede. I have heard the heads of our philosophical schools, rich bankers and merchants, and politicians of the *salon*, holding up absolute cosmopolitanism. Far from blaming the sentiment by which they represented themselves to be animated, I shared it; but they had mistaken the epoch. When a nation has assumed

the initiation of a principle, and especially of a democratic principle—and when it is in the geographical position in which we are placed, even if it should fairly indulge the hope of obtaining sympathy from enlightened men among our neighbours, it has certainly all the other governments for its open or secret enemies, and particularly those which are ruled by a powerful aristocracy. For such enemies all means are good.

It would be a misfortune to this nation if it ever saw the extinction of that love which it merits, and which constitutes its greatest strength. Its sons must close around its colours, even in the interest of that principle which it is commissioned to spread abroad in triumph, for the benefit of other nations. When these shall have conquered the same rights as France possesses, it will then be the time to silence all those rivalries of self-love, and those antipathies which blood has transmitted to us. What! Frenchmen, shall we not maintain in ourselves, in the interest of a generous thought, which has already cost us so much blood, a patriotism which the English carry even to insolence and cruelty for the sake of their profits on tea, indigo, and cotton!

Let us always endeavour to make the love of country our first virtue; and I particularly recommend it to our literary men, who have greater oppor-

tunities of expatiating on it than any other class. Is it necessary for me to recall to mind that my patriotism has never prevented me from expressing my desire that the rights of humanity should be respected, and that peace, which can assure with greater certainty the progress of the principle of our Revolution, should be honourably maintained. I have often been heard to say, since 1830, "When bayonets are once crossed, the progress of ideas is arrested."

The entrance of Louis XVIII., which I was anxious to see, presented the most singular medley. How had enthusiasm gained possession of the masses, who did not know who the individuals were that were thus brought back to them! It was certain that scarcely one spectator in fifty could have precisely explained the degree of relationship in which these princes stood to Louis XVI. The King, whom many people expected to see wrapped up in a petticoat, because error and malignity had so described him, showed in spite of his infirmities an affable and dignified countenance, which excited general satisfaction. In such a ceremony, old men are generally regarded with a benevolent feeling. We, who formed the general crowd collected on the occasion, had scarcely time to see any of the secondary personages. But in all this *cortège*, which necessarily appeared so tasteless and pitiful to eyes accustomed to the pomp of the Napoleonic *fêtes*

the only portion to which universal honour was shown consisted of some detachments of the Imperial Guard, whom they had succeeded in inducing to march behind the carriages of the old court, or, of the new court, whichever they may prefer to call it. At the sight of those manly figures, furrowed with so many scars, bleached by so many different suns,—to-day so grave, so sad, almost ashamed of the white cockades which they were compelled to wear, shouts burst forth in all directions, "*Vive la Garde Imperiale!*" Those even who had exclaimed, "*Vive le Roi!*" add their voices to increase this imperial clamour, which produced the strangest contrast, and must, to all appearance, have struck terror into the ear of the princes. Being received in this manner, the old *braves* raise their heads more proudly, and reply to this glorious salutation by exclaiming, "*Vive la Garde Nationale!*" The two cries are mingled and prolonged throughout the whole march, in spite of the rules of discipline,which do not allow of speaking when under arms. From that moment the return from the isle of Elba might have been prophecied.

Notwithstanding the ridiculous name of the *Desired* given to Louis XVIII., who for twenty-five years was repulsed by France, the only person of all this family whom people at this time desired to see was the Duchesse d'Angoulême. The people knew her

history. Every one pitied her misfortunes, and desired for her a happier destiny. Every eye looked for her as a consoling angel in the midst of so many calamities. Alas! nothing in her countenance, in her manner, in the sound of her voice, corresponded to our hopes; and it may be said that, from the day of her entrance, she lost that affection which had not abandoned her during the whole period of her misfortunes. There was, without doubt, injustice in so sudden a change. As for me, I have always been persuaded that the Duchess merits most of the eulogiums which I have heard pronounced upon her character. Her virtues can no more be doubted than her charity. But how happens it that they have often exalted the strength of her character, and that they have never cited in respect to her any of those acts which a woman placed in such an exalted rank always finds an opportunity of performing, in order to obtain the benedictions of the people? Did the heroic Madame de la Vallette fall down on her knees before her, without obtaining even a single word of commiseration? I have seen it printed, and I should like to see it denied. Let us remark that those who were most about the person of the Duchesse d'Angoulême, used no great exertions to restore to her the affections of this people, of whom every heart was once open to her, and who soon only saw in her the daughter of the *Austrian*. For it

must not be concealed that the unfortunate end of Marie Antoinette has not restored her memory in the eyes of the people of Paris, who have ever preserved an instinctive hatred against the royal blood of Austria. Notwithstanding its love for Napoleon and the King of Rome, it never had any affection for Marie Louise, who has only too well justified our presentiments, and the reception which Paris gave her worthy father in 1814.

During the sojourn of the allied kings, Alexander endeavoured to merit our praises by a studied magnanimity, which was not without its charm. It was remembered that the King of Prussia had suffered a long period of misfortune, had displayed the bravery of a soldier, and the simplicity of a citizen. But when the Emperor Francis appeared, there was not a sufficient number of maledictions and of *quolibets* for him in all the classes of our population. Why has he not heard what was said of him during his progress, every time that he showed himself in public? Notwithstanding his impassibility, he would perhaps have blushed.

With us Parisians, the enthusiastic admirers of great talents, of great virtues, every noble and royal prestige is now for ever destroyed. To whatever condition a man may belong, if he has incurred blame, he receives the same epithet. Our ancestors would have been very much astonished if they could have

been informed that, in Paris, an Emperor of Austria, a successor of Rodolph of Hapsburg and of Charles the Fifth, had been treated by the people with the most outrageous insult. And this was done quite openly, and at the very moment when this crowd, which covered him with its contempt, had every eye directed in search of his glorious brother, the Prince Charles, who had not come to Paris, but who would have been received there as a generous and loyal enemy.

Foreigners, no doubt, will think that I speak in too irreverent a manner of princes, who came to pass themselves in review before the Parisian people. But let them reflect on the education which my contemporaries and myself received from events, and they will no longer be astonished. The Convention, which beheaded kings, might have seen from what took place in England that it had not taken the best method to disenchant us of majesty. Providence did the work. It exalted to the summit of power a little sous-lieutenant, who, for fifteen years, gave us the exact measure of all the royal puppets.

A few hours after the capitulation of Paris, Bernadotte arrived among us. In order to justify himself for having combated against his former compatriots, he said that he had been obliged to become a Swede in accepting the inheritance of the crown of Sweden.

By this argument, the only thing that Moreau required to efface the disgrace of his death among our enemies was a crown. The place of Bernadotte in history would have been very different if he had quitted a throne to fly to the assistance of his native country. Besides, the quality of Swede was not so near the heart of this Gascon, so well preserved amid the ice of the North, that he might not have consented to become a Frenchman again. But he only consented to do so at the expense of the throne of France. With this old republican, no bargain was possible, unless a kingdom was the price of it. As to his religion, he sacrificed it as a thing of no importance.

His Majesty had brought along with him Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant. I will speak of this illustrious publicist, who has displayed as much inconstancy and mobility in his conduct as, in the tribune and in his writings, he has shown, with few exceptions, talent, courage, and perseverance in the principles of a wise liberty. Unfortunately, perhaps, the facility of his elocution was such, that provided a tribune was accessible to him, and a press with however little of freedom, he would have accommodated himself to any *régime*. But that was merely the fault of an intelligence which delighted in sporting with difficulties, and regarded every mark of applause with which it was

greeted as so many triumphs of its cause. I have observed that, according to my conviction, the obstacles opposed by restrictive laws to the expression of thought, were a necessary stimulant to this writer—in his wit the most delicate of all the men of intellect I have known. I never listened to conversation which appeared to me more fraught with grace, sprightliness, flexibility, and apparent affability than his. It became brilliant and strong when he was excited by contradiction. I did not regard it in any offensive light on this account, and he was far from having any bad feeling with respect to me.* A per-

* The following is a letter of Benjamin Constant, which is well worthy of being transcribed. It enables us to see how far the influence of the popular poet extended in 1829, and the manner in which one of the first chiefs and directors of public opinion came to render an account to him of his actions, to justify his thoughts themselves, and to solicit a place in his friendship.—*Note by the Editor.*

"My dear Béranger.—Although your letter contains several things that might have afflicted or wounded me, it is pervaded by such an inexpressible spirit of friendship and of interest, that it has had the singular effect of causing me pleasure rather than pain. You are one of those men towards whom I have felt myself most powerfully attracted. Several circumstances have, on different occasions, combated this attraction, without destroying it. They have caused no coldness in my inmost heart, but they have produced a feeling of restraint and estrangement. I have opened your letter; I have found friendship in it; and I am anxious to come

petual craving after emotions made Benjamin Constant a gamester; but political interests easily snatched him away from this borrowed passion. Nevertheless, literary glory was the first in his view. The French Academy, therefore, in preferring Viennet to him,

to an explanation with you, in the sincere desire that you may understand me and approve.

"I take your letter phrase by phrase. I neither labour for, nor do I set myself in opposition to, the *Fusion*. I am of your opinion with regard to what is personal to me. I believe that those who wish to advance themselves think only of themselves, and do not associate me with their success, if they have any; and, for my part, I would not purchase the greatest amount of success at the expense of the least principle. If you thought that I entertained ambitious views, you would commit an error which on your part would astonish me. I am sixty years of age; I have fought for liberty, not without some glory. I have acquired that which I desired—reputation. My only wish, the one thing on which, rightly or wrongly, my imagination remains fixed is, to leave after me some reputation, and I believe that I shall have less as a minister than as a writer and a deputy. I wish it to be said after I am gone, that I contributed to the foundation of liberty in France, and it will perhaps be said, long after the coteries—those which would reject me if I attempted to become one of their number, as well as those which calumniate me in your hearing, a thing which gives me much more pain—shall be buried and forgotten.

"As to popularity, I like it, I seek for it, I enjoy it till the present moment with delight; but I also owe it to the manner in which I have always expressed my thought. If I endeavoured to exaggerate it, I should destroy my talent, just as if I should take it into my

inflicted a severe pang on him—whatever he may have said to me in order to dissemble his feelings.

The unfavourable side of the glory ascribed to intellect is its uncertainty for those who obtain it. If you are six feet high, it will not be necessary for

head to falsify it. You think that you perceive tergiversations in my letters to the *Courrier;* you are in error. My opinion is precisely as I express it in these letters. I firmly believe that France cannot for a long period from this time be free, otherwise than by consolidating on the really existing foundations, that degree of liberty which she already possesses, or ought to possess. I may be wrong; but my conviction is, that we ought to remain firmly attached to constitutional monarchy. I know, or I believe I know, that the old governments are more favourable to liberty than new ones. If the dynasty declares itself hostile, come what may, my mission is not to save those who would destroy themselves. My support will never be given to absolute power, and legitimacy will not obtain it. But all desire for the overthrow of power, without any other motive than recollections and hatreds, shall never enter into my thought. Such is my profession of faith in relation to you; I may deceive myself, but I conceal nothing—I veil nothing; and if my opinions are displeasing, the charge must be made against their matter and not their form; which in no way proceeds from the measures of which you suspect me, nor from a desire of success which I do not experience.

"This brings me back to the *Fusion*. I repeat that I do not labour for it; that not one of these who do labour for it, has once spoken to me about it; and that if it takes place in such a manner that the hesitating and egotistical party melts into the liberal, I shall be delighted at it. But I shall always resist any measure by

you to become one of a company of grenadiers, in order to be able to form an idea of your height. Yet Constant, after so much success as a writer and an orator, considered it necessary to establish the faith in his literary worth by becoming a member of an illus-

which the last would suffer itself to be weakened by the other.

"You have been told that I was sent to the *Courrier* in the same way as I was to Strasbourg. M. Laffitte knows that the shareholders of the *Courrier* requested me to become a competitor for it. I was not the first to conceive the idea; I consented to it. I think that I acted well. I believe I have written useful things, and in every circumstance I always thought what I said.

"This is a very long letter, my dear Béranger. I am pleased to speak to you in perfect freedom. I should like this petty bickering, which they have wished me to have with you, to be the epoch of a more intimate and confidential friendship. You are, I again say it, the man for whom, in all France, I feel the greatest sympathy. When you depend on your own judgments, I would have you for an arbiter, in preference to any other. I offer you a full and entire attachment. If we differ on some subjects, it is because our minds have received a different impress. That does not at all touch affection. I aspire to your acceptance of mine; and I assure you I have never said a word, nor had a thought, that ought to wound you.

"You see that I reply not only without rancour, but with true affection. My appreciation of your wit, and my affection for your talent, can be no more weakened. I intend to pay you a visit frequently with La Fayette.

"*Tout à vous pour la vie,*

"BENJAMIN CONSTANT."

29th, January, 1829.

trious body. No sooner would he have been received into the Academy than he would have been the very first to laugh at it. He would again have fallen into a state of uncertainty; for no man became more quickly disenchanted with what he had once most eagerly desired.

I had myself advised him to take part in the competition for the vacant chair—confessing to him that, if I had no ambition for the same honour, it was because it was accompanied by too many inconveniences for my disposition and tastes. I also added that, in my opinion, the reputations that spring up at a period of transition, scarcely deserve to be upheld at the cost of independence; because, with the exception of two or three of these reputations, the others must disappear completely with us, and perhaps before us. I was resigned; he was not; and the sentiment which he necessarily had of his own force was sufficient to make him conceive this idea. He had not long to suffer the effects of the intrigue which deprived him of the honour, to which he had undoubtedly many claims. A few days after, he died, exhausted with labours and with vigils; and the Academy must have regretted that the magnificent and popular obsequies, with which he was honoured, were not those of one of its members. These gentlemen have themselves usually interred in a much more modest manner.

I have just said that he had returned into France with Bernadotte. He did not like me to refer to this period in conversation. It suited him better to speak of the part which he played near the person of Napoleon during the Hundred Days. He has confessed the influence exercised over him by this man, who, he said, was possessed of immense knowledge, divined everything that he did not know, had as much wit as genius, and more ideas truly liberal than any of the members of his Council. Without wishing to magnify the liberality of the councillors, I have always thought that this last part of the eulogium of the master was employed by Constant as a means of justifying himself for having served the man whom, on the 20th of March, he called a tyrant. "But Bernadotte?" I repeated to him often. "Bernadotte is engaged in negociations with the view of having some pages of the *Mémoires de Sainte Hélène* blotted out; if he concludes this bargain, I will tell you all the good of him possible." Such was the answer which he one day made to me, when in relation to the publication of these memoirs, we spoke of several of the great personages of the Empire. And since then, indeed, it has been regarded as a positive fact that certain pages relative to Marshal Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte-Corvo, had been removed from the precious manuscript.

I neither knew, nor had any wish to know Madame de Staël. Although endowed with superior wit and talent, her fortune and position did not the less contribute to exaggerate the literary reputation which she merited. Napoleon had disdained to make her his Ageria; and the fall of the great man was a source of joy to this woman's heart. In the saloons, also, she never ceased to congratulate foreigners on our ruin. I am not aware that she ever had the idea of supporting the pretensions which brought Bernadotte to France. As to this former republican, the following is an anecdote which has been related to me by a man, who was able to obtain it from a good source, even although he had not been himself a witness of the fact.

In the few days that he passed almost *incognito* at Paris, before he had opened his mind to the Emperor Alexander, in whom much hesitation with regard to the Bourbons had always been remarked, Bernadotte, wishing to play with prudence his *rôle* of a pretender to the crown of France, thought it necessary to sound one of the ministers of the autocrat. A dinner was arranged with the Count Pozzo di Borgo, another exile, a Coriolanus of the antichamber, whom a shameless writer has not blushed to put on a level with Bonaparte. Charles John, eager to open the

question, demanded of the Russian minister, if the sovereigns had determined on any definite course with regard to France. "*Ma foi!* Prince," answered the cunning Corsican, "they are very embarrassed about it, and I am of opinion that the counsels of your Highness, being well acquainted with this country, would be very advantageous. What do you think the powers ought to do? What chief ought they to give to a nation so difficult to govern?" The Gascon was anxious for an answer, and not for questions; he asks, however, if the choice still remains to be made. "You ought to know."

"Yes, it is still almost free, notwithstanding the urgent entreaties of the House of Bourbon."

"It appears to me, M. le Comte, that this family is quite strange here, and that what France especially requires is a Frenchman, who has no reproach to bring against the Revolution."

"There can be no doubt of that."

"That it requires a man who possesses sufficient military knowledge."

"I think exactly as your Highness."

"A man who understands the administration of affairs on a great scale—who is familiar with the interests of Europe."

"Just so, Prince—just so; continue, I entreat you."

"A man, in fine, whom the sovereigns have

already been able to appreciate, and whose character is a guarantee of moderation and good faith."

"Very well, Prince, I have taken the liberty of saying and of writing all that you have done me the honour to communicate. I have done more; I have ventured to designate the man to whom, in my opinion, it would be advantageous to commit the destinies of our common country."

Whilst thus speaking, Pozzo appeared to turn a look of respectful regard upon Bernadotte, who, repressing his exultation, said in a smiling manner, "Would there be any indiscretion in demanding of you, who is the person whom your experience has designated?"

"Your Highness has already divined, I wager."

"I might deceive myself, M. le Comte. Name, I beg you, the man who has your suffrage."

"You demand it, Prince. Very well. It is myself—I, myself—who am a Frenchman, a soldier, an administrator, to whom the interests of Europe are known, and who am the friend of almost all the sovereigns. Are these not the conditions that your Highness requires?"

Bernadotte, excited to fury by such a mystification, rose from table, and, certain that the Russian courtier would never have dared to express himself in such a manner without having come to a perfect under-

standing with the Czar, he took his departure from Paris on the very day on which the Comte d'Artois made his entry, in the midst of the ammunition waggons of the enemy, with a small staff, and under the escort of some good sayings which M. Beugnot, and some other royalists—new converts —had prepared for him.

In relating this anecdote, embellished, perhaps, by the wit from whom I heard it, but which I believe to be in the main true, I cannot avoid recalling to mind M. de Vernon, that hypothetical descendant of Louis XIII., of whom I before spoke. In 1814, it would have been agreeable to see him claiming his rights, and assuming an appearance of devotion to the safety of France. I believe, indeed, that if the people had been consulted, the descendant of the Iron Mask would have had, after Napoleon and his son, a good chance of obtaining the greatest number of suffrages.

The wonderful return of the Emperor, on the 20th of March, 1815, was an event altogether popular. On this day of expectation, however, there could be read on the forehead of reflecting men—and there are such in all classes—an anxiety which prevented the joy from being general, notwithstanding the fascination which this last miracle of the great man exercised over all minds.

Although at this period I began to frequent the

company of several of the principal actors in our great drama, I should have had nothing but acts of baseness of no great importance to signalize, but for the fortunate recollection of my venerable friend, Dupont (de l'Eure), whose virtue has resisted the exigencies, seductions, and even the exercise of power. I have obtained from him the account of a conversation between the representative Durbach and the great traitor of 1815, the too famous Fouché. But in relating it here, I fear I shall not be able to colour it with that lively indignation, which this conversation still causes that generous patriot to experience, whenever he repeats it.

After the battle of Waterloo, Fouché, president of the Provisional Government, held the threads of the intrigues, which had been long prepared, and which occupied him exclusively during the continuance of the ministry confided to him by Napoleon after the 20th of March. The re-opening of the gates of the capital to the Bourbons appears to have been his only thought. To effect this object, no labour was spared by this audacious man. He corresponded with Talleyrand, Metternich, Wellington, and even with Louis XVIII.; he scattered his emissaries all over the country; he lavishly distributed his seductions; he alarmed the timid; he bargained with traitors; no effort cost him too much.

Among other means which he employed, I shall relate one, which has a touch of comedy in it.

A deputation from Paris, sent to the camp of the enemy to negotiate, demanded that Manuel, who had become the most influential orator of the Chamber of Representatives, and who had had at Aix some relations with Fouché, should be associated with them. The latter, dreading the patriotism of the tribune, sent in the place, and under the name of Manuel, whom his associates did not know, one of his secretaries, named Fabri, also a member of the second chamber. M. the Comte de Valence was one of the associates thus mystified, and I myself saw him several years afterwards when he visited Manuel, whom he came to consult as an advocate, and who, he was surprised to find, was not the man with whom he believed that he had spent several hours in political conferences. I knew the Count, and I assisted Manuel in clearing up this old imposture of the Scapin of Nantes. "Ah, Monsieur Manuel," said the General, "I am no longer astonished at the silence which he, whom I took for you, maintained, when I insisted with the allied generals that they should come to the decision of compelling the Bourbons to accept the tricoloured cockade."*

* This M. Fabri had been one of the friends of Manuel at Aix. The latter, having no wish to take part in the

M. de Vitrolles, a courageous royalist, who had entered into relations with Fouché, was then taking some steps so openly that the report of them reached General Solignac, a representative, who hastily proceeded at an early hour to warn his colleagues, Durbach and Dupont (one of the vice-presidents of the chamber.) The three hastily repaired to the Duke of Otranto, whom they found in a *déshabille*, calculated to add to the disagreeable impression of his visage.

After having listened to the reproaches of these gentlemen, and the pressing questions of Dupont, Fouché enters into deceitful explanations; and seeing that he can persuade no one, he ventures to remind them of his revolutionary titles to the hatred of the Bourbons. These titles had unfortunately gained for him the confidence of several citizens; and among others, of Manuel, whose loyal soul forgot that, in political disorders, those who have the most to redeem

deputation to which this town offered to appoint him, got Fabri named as representative. Manuel, however, was appointed at Barcelonnette. He believed in the sincerity of the principles of Fouché, the conventionalist and regicide; and Fouché did all that he could to maintain relations with him, even after the second return of the Bourbons. Manuel assisted him in the preparation of the notes, which had then a great reputation, because they revealed the dangerous course which the court was following. Fouché, by these notes, wished to avert his own fall,—Manuel to render service to France.

are often the most ready to sell themselves. Wearied at length of the rambling statements of Fouché, Durbach rises at the words frequently repeated, "Do you forget, then, who I am?" and answers, "No, we cannot forget it, and recollections crowd upon me. What, indeed, is Monseigneur le Duc d'Otrante? Is he not that ex-oratorian, the president of popular assemblies, who, when shouts of execration interrupted a working man, demanding the abolition of the Supreme Being, exclaimed, 'Let the young philosopher speak?'—that Fouché who, with Collot d'Herbois, bathed himself in the blood of the Lyonnese?—that Fouché who voted for the death of Louis Capet, with a power of logic which he afterwards pretended to have been only fear? —that Fouché who saved and betrayed in turn the Girondists, Danton, the Mountain, and Robespierre. You are right, M. le Duc, between Fouché and the Bourbons, no agreement is possible. No, you cannot, an accomplice of the priest Talleyrand, deliver Paris to princes who will ever see in you one of the executioners of their brother. If they could forget it for an instant, the daughter of Louis XVI. would remind them of it on her knees, with tears in her eyes. The more favours and dignities they would bestow on you for their restoration to the throne, the more reason would they have, soon after, to make you expiate their own weakness. Fear, then, spite of the

friendship of Wellington, to be obliged to envy Carnot, whose virtues you rail at. Let that man be proscribed; he is sure to meet everywhere with the sympathy of all magnanimous hearts. But think of it, M. le Duc,—Fouché proscribed, after having sold the Emperor, the nation, and its representatives; Fouché, out of France, in what place will he show himself where they will not remember, on seeing him, that Robespierre himself called him a man of blood, or where they will not repeat those words of Napoleon, 'Behold the man who puts his dirty feet in the shoes of everybody.' To die an exile, and to die infamous, M. le Duc, is too great a punishment. Betray us, and you will have to undergo both these penalties."

Fouché, pale with repressed fury, wishing to assume an air of disdain, stammered out some insignificant remarks, which he terminated by a sort of proverbial expression, which his paid panegyrists have used as a text, in order to soften the impression of his crimes, "I have never betrayed either a friend or a principle;" as if such a man had either friends or principles.

Convinced of the inutility of the step they had taken, the three representatives retired in indignation. Two days after, the foreigners were masters of Paris. Louis XVIII. made his entry into it, and Fouché was his minister. The prediction of Durbach, however, did not the less receive its accomplishment, and the

remembrance of it must have pursued Fouché even to his tomb, which has remained a proscribed place.

This second return of the King differed from the first in a way very melancholy, both for himself and for all connected with him. Confined in his carriage, he appeared anxious to protest against the display of foreign troops by whom, on this occasion, he was surrounded and guarded. On arriving at the Tuileries, in order there to resume his crown, he could see at the end of the Pont Royal, the Prussian cannons pointed against his palace—a position in which they menaced him for more than a month. Blücher was anxious to afford him the spectacle of the destruction of the Pont d'Jéna; and, even in his own Louvre, his friend Wellington, whom he had made a Marshal of France, ordered the pillage of the statues and paintings of the Museum, without respect to the treaties by which we were guaranteed the possession of them.

Speaking one day of the spoliation of this museum, the richest of the world, I asked M. d'Anglis, an emigrant from Ghent, and a short time since Prefect of Police, why they had not recourse to the men of the faubourgs, who would have hastened with the greatest zeal to defend this national property. "They would have taken good care of that," he answered me; "the museum is too near the Chateau." Put your faith, then, in all the royalists have told

you of the love with which the people regard the Bourbons!

But against whom were the insults of the foreign generals directed? It was no longer Napoleon whom they pursued. Against whom could they turn their animosity? It is said that Blücher, Gneisnau, Buloff, and several members of German secret associations, detested the Bourbons, and had made the proposition to General Maison to get quit of them, and, Prussians and French united, to fall upon the English, whom Blücher could not forgive for attributing to themselves the victory in the battle of Waterloo; which but for the unexpected succour afforded by the Prussian corps, which Grouchy had allowed to escape from him, would have been a defeat for them. It is at least certain that proposals were made to Maison, who had returned from Ghent, dissatisfied with those for whom he had gone there; but it is difficult to determine the sense and the value of the conference which took place. But this is true, that the King of Prussia was no longer the master of his own army. It was only on the arrival of Alexander, for whom he had to wait a little, that the hostilities of Blücher ceased; although the autocrat himself appeared very much cooled in his interest for the restored family, on account of a revelation he had received, regarding a project of alliance between

France, Austria, and England, negotiated in 1814 by M. de Talleyrand.

Although the good-will of Alexander was but little, and the conduct of the Prussians insulting, these circumstances did not at all diminish the pleasure of Louis XVIII. in reigning anew. He pardoned all those on whom he had no expectation of being able to take vengeance. The legitimists, equally regardless of our frightful disasters, danced no less under his windows, mingling with their songs of attachment to the grandson of Henry IV. cries of hatred against those, who, having heard him swear that he would die on the steps of his throne, could not restrain the laughter caused by his flight during the night between the 19th and 20th of March. These cries were the signals of a long and bloody reaction, almost all the odium of which Louis XVIII. allowed to fall on his partisans, and even on the members of his own family but which, he wished to have the honour of bringing to an end himself alone, when he thought that there was danger in increasing the number of victims.

This man had a false and wicked heart. He is the only one of the Bourbons we have known, who has deserved this accusation. Charles X., setting aside his political and religous infatuations, which have destroyed himself, and might have been

fatal to us, has left in France the reputation of being an easy and good man, worthy of possessing friends—many of whom, indeed, he had, who remained faithful to him. His brother had only favourites.

He was destitute of affection for his family to such a degree, that he was reputed to be the author of a protestation against the legitimacy of the children of Marie-Antoinette. I remember having seen in my youth, in the hands of some of the most zealous royalists, the copy of a testamentary letter of this unfortunate Princess, in which she said to her children, "Have no confidence in your uncles." This phrase, it may be supposed, is not in the document published in 1816; but who knows whether some alteration has not been made on the original, replaced by a fac-simile after the removal of the papers of Courtois,* who was proscribed in 1815. The man who revealed the secret of the hiding place in which they were concealed, was, according to report, generously rewarded.

We are assured that, although Louis XVIII. called the Duchesse d'Angoulême in public his Antigone, there was no affection between the uncle and the niece; and I have often thought that it was this

* Courtois, after the 9th Thermidor, had been employed to collect and examine the papers of Robespierre, which included a great number of interesting documents, in relation to the history of the Revolution.—*Editor's Note.*

sentiment of her powerlessness which prevented the Duchess from showing herself ready to aid those political victims who implored her support. This would be an additional misfortune, for which we should have to pity her.

The appearance of opposition, which the song of the *Roi d'Yvetot* had given me on the fall of the Empire, induced the belief that I was going to identify myself with the interests of legitimacy. Propositions were made to me, and recompenses were promised, even before the arrival of the Bourbons, if I would consent to celebrate them in song. "Let them give us liberty in exchange for glory; let them render France happy, and I will sing them without reward," was my answer to those who had taken upon themselves the task of recruiting the number of their partisans. Every recruit was of value. Let it not be thought that I boast. At this moment I remember that, several years after, bantering Mademoiselle Bourgoin on the royalism which she had displayed in 1815, this witty actress replied to me with that peculiar tone that is so well known—"I was living at that time with a royalist, and such as we, you know, are always of the opinion of our lovers. Louis XVIII. was desirous of seeing me, in order to congratulate me on my devotion and courage; that had turned my head. I am not, therefore, so much to be blamed. But what must we think

of these Bourbons who attached importance to the opinions of such a giddy (*décousue*) girl as I was!" The crudity of the word increases its aptness.

In 1816, in the month of January, Arnault being banished, quitted France, and we conducted him as far as Bourget, which was at that time, so to speak, the limit of the kingdom—the remaining part being, in that direction, placed under foreign occupation. In the evening, in the chamber of an inn, at table with a young officer of *gendarmerie*, whose charge it was to watch over this frontier, and who deplored the misfortunes of the country, I sang to the poor *proscrit* the song of the *Birds*—sad adieus, followed by adieus sadder still. This song very nearly led to the loss of the little appointment for which I was indebted to Arnault. His own appointment was given to M. Petitot, a man of letters, who had become a devotee and a legitimist, but who did not manifest the less kindness to me, and several times even endeavoured to persuade me to bring under notice the persecutions experienced by my father, and to derive all the advantage I could from my former relations with M. de Bourmont, who had attained so unhappily a high fortune after the battle of Waterloo. Although I knew that this general had caused researches to be made, in order to learn what had become of my father and of me, I was far from wishing to avail myself of any

advantage I could derive from an opinion which was not mine. M. Petitot only testified so much the more interest on my account, and constantly defended me against the denunciations of many individuals, whom, on the occasion of the Emperor's return, I defended and protected. I began to have a near view of many infamies. I was yet to see more of them, and greater ones. Alcestis was grieved for very little.

It was at the end of the year 1815, that I ventured on the publication of my first volume of songs. I had reached an age when men begin to have a foresight of the inconveniences of a literary career. The want of money could alone determine me to enter into direct contact with the public, so much the more that I had as yet only a very vague appreciation of the utility of my songs for the cause I had embraced. The volume was well received, and did not affect my position in the university. "*We must pardon many things in the author of the* ROI D'YVETOT," was I am assured, the expression of Louis XVIII., who, following the traditions of the ancient régime, was fond of songs, and whom they even accused of having died with mine on his night table.

I wish to have it remarked, in relation to this volume, published when I was attached to the *Bureaux* of Public Instruction, that it contains the greatest number of verses, which recall the rather

cynical licenses of our old literature. Nothing more completely proves that I did not think they ought to incur any grave reproaches. When I was told that our old authors of the school of Rabelais were not models to imitate, even in songs, it was too late to cancel verses which, as I have said elsewhere, contributed to obtain for me a popular reputation. From that moment they belonged to the public. To remove them from the new editions would have been useless. Besides, the booksellers would not have been willing to consent to it; and I confess that there are some of them which I should have very much regretted. Moreover, does it become the age in which I live to show itself severe towards productions of which gaiety is the excuse, if not even the counter poison, when romance and the theatre have carried even to obscenity the painting of the most brutal passions. Has even the highest poetry nothing to reproach itself with in respect to errors of this nature?

Let those who would insist on these reproaches, that have been made against me by so many persons, examine the poetical works of Goethe; they will see that this great poet was not so severe as they are in regard to the songs of my youth.

There is one observation which I must make. The songs put *à l'index* were composed in the time of the Empire. Now, it is remarkable, that it is invariably

at epochs of despotism that we observe the appearance of such productions. The mind is under such a necessity of liberty that, when it is deprived of it, it leaps the barriers which are the least carefully defended, at the risk of carrying too far this flight of independence. Wise governments know what dispositions to take. That of Venice protected the courtesans.

These are not excuses which I offer,—they are explanations which I give. It is well understood, moreover, that I speak here only of the songs which compose a portion of the collections I have published, and not of all those which have been introduced under my name in the spurious Belgian and French editions.

There is a last reason which ought to obtain for me the absolution of my former misdeeds. But I am afraid lest it turn out to my detriment. Let me venture it, however! In the time of our fathers, people amused themselves with the song, but had no particular prepossession for it. In giving it an importance which it never before had, I authorized the critics of our chaste age to be more severe in respect to it. Did I know the destiny that awaited my little volumes, in which the jovialities of my youth and the political refrains of my mature age were inserted without order? "In elevating this style, you have spoilt it," our Aristarchs will reply to me. I see it, gentlemen. In order to escape the *index*, it would

have been sufficient for me to compose only certain wanton songs. Unfortunately, I am no longer of an age to profit by the lesson.

The period at which my songs led me to assume a kind of personal part in political affairs, was that in which I felt the necessity of making my Muse cast off some of her lighter peculiarities.

The publication of my first volume had for its result to establish me as the song-writer of the Opposition. It was already evident that I was a man of sincere and disinterested convictions. During the Hundred Days, the place of *censeur* of a journal (the *Journal Général*, which afterwards became the *Courrier Français*,) had been proposed to me, but I had refused the offer, notwithstanding the pressing requests by which it was accompanied. This situation was worth six thousand francs. In declining to accept it, I was refusing more than abundance, when I was destitute even of the necessary. To provide for all my expenses, I had at that time only my situation, the salary of which was so small, having given up to M. de Bleschamps, the father of Madame Lucien Bonaparte, who had fallen into want in consequence of the exile of his son-in-law, the sum which I received from the Institute. By arrangements made under the direction of Arnault and Regnauld de Saint-Jean-d'Angély, I alone had a legal right to it, and indeed,

I had received it until the year 1814, the period at which M. Lucien was struck out of the academy by a royal ordonnance. But it was already a long time since I had considered it my duty to deliver the amount, month by month, into the hands of the father of the Princess, who returned me a receipt for it.

My relations with Manuel date from the end of 1816. He was reserved and difficult of access. I was still very unpolished; and yet on the occasion of our first interview we felt that we were made for that intimate friendship which was established between us in a few days, and which death alone could dissolve. He was a habitual visitor at the house of M. Laffitte, and it was by him that I was taken there. I have never had much liking for these gentlemen of finance, for their gilded saloons, and their bustling society. "There is no affection to be looked for there," I said to Manuel. Nevertheless, he spent a great portion of his time in it. I went with him, and I had reason to congratulate myself for it. If the political position of Laffitte induced me to reject his obliging offers, I am no less under obligations to him for the service which his friendship gave me an opportunity of rendering to many of my intimate friends, and for the great number of unfortunates whom he relieved at my recommendation. I have also

had the good fortune to have been able to be useful, on occasions of importance, to this great citizen, who was a man of as much intellect as honour, whose moral excellence was not inferior to his imagination, but who did not sufficiently direct his penetrating mind to the attainment of a knowledge of men, a circumstance which rendered him the victim of many of those even whom he had overwhelmed with benefits. They have, moreover, in vain endeavoured to accumulate calumnies against his old age, which was so agitated. The good sense of the people has always rendered him justice; an encouraging and noble example to those who, like Laffitte, consecrate their whole existence to the service of their country.

He has committed one fault with which I frequently reproached him. It was that of having purchased the magnificent *château de Maisons*, the most wearisome abode that I know, and which never appeared endurable to me except in the company of Manuel, Thiers, and Mignet. Being alone there on one occasion, I happened to quit the château with the intention of going across the forest to dine at the restaurant of Saint-Germain. I have not forgotten that in this royal habitation, in which, however, they still show the chamber occupied by Voltaire, I had never been able to compose a single couplet. I was not born for *châteaux*, and that, perhaps, makes me

unjust to Mansard, for which I ought, nevertheless, even on account of the garrets (*mansardes*), to have a great affection.

Thrown into the midst of the most opulent society my poverty was the cause of no embarrassment to me, for it cost me no effort to say, "I am poor." This word which is uttered with hesitation by so many, is almost as good as a fortune, because it obtains for you the privilege of being economical, and conciliates the interest of many women, and, consequently, that of the *salons*, which in this respect have been mis-represented. Do not make your poverty a cause of restraint to others. Even laugh at it on fitting occasions, and they will have sympathy for it without wounding your pride. What I say here, I have often repeated to our young friends who, too much dazzled by aristocratical splendour, are ashamed to live without it. If they are desirous of compromising neither their honour nor their independence, let them learn to say, "I am poor."

This *rôle* of Aristophanes, which at the age of twenty appeared so beautiful to me, without the genius, but also, at least so it seems to me, without the acrimony of the Athenian poet, I played, not in the theatre, where, perhaps, it is no longer possible, but in all the ranks of French society. It was sufficient for me to give my most recent verses, or to allow

a copy of them to be taken, and in a few days they were circulating through France, crossing the frontier, and bearing consolation even to our unfortunate exiles, who were then wandering over the whole globe. I am, perhaps, the only author who, in modern times, in order to obtain a reputation, could have dispensed with the printing press. To what have I owed this advantage? To the old airs on which, if I may venture to say it, I mounted my ideas as it were on horseback, and to the good sense which kept me from despising the cultivation of an inferior style which led to no literary honours. Among the men who devoted themselves to letters at this epoch, few, I am convinced, would have been willing to follow the same course. I have only taken that which others rejected. I was at an age when men do not suffer themselves to be easily dazzled by success. In order to merit that which I afterwards obtained, I endeavoured to turn it to the advantage of that style to which I was afterwards to make the sacrifice of all my other projects. It was the rule at the *Caveau*, that academy of song, that the verses should be brilliant only with wit and gaiety; but that was too little for me: I was born in a greater or less degree a poet fitted to excel in a peculiar style, and I did not at first perceive that that element of poetry which was in me could find scope in this species of composition,

which was much less studied than practised. Reflection at length taught me its capabilities. Song, moreover, opened up to me a path in which my genius could develop itself at ease. I escaped by it from academical requirements, and I had at my disposal the whole dictionary—of which, according to La Harpe, four-fifths are excluded from our poetry.*

Nor could I conceal from myself that the steadfastness of my principles did not exclude a great susceptibility to varied impressions, which might hinder the completion of any rather extended work in a uniform tone. The author must study man in himself, which he cannot do when he makes his appearance at too early a period. As soon as I fully understood the nature of my own powers, and the literary independence which song would procure for me, I resolutely determined on the course I should pursue. I espoused the poor *fille de joie*, with the intention of rendering her worthy to be presented in the saloons of our aristocracy; without, however, forcing her to renounce her former relations, for it was necessary that she should remain a daughter of the people, from whom she expected her dowry. I have

* It must be recollected that I made these reflections before the appearance of the new school, which, as the *Médecin malgré lui* says, "*a changé tout cela.*"—*Note by Béranger.*

been rewarded for this to an extent far beyond anything merited by my works, which had at least the merit of directing poetry to political debates for nearly twenty years. The legitimist party, which has always judged me as an author with the greatest benevolence, has accused me of having contributed more than any other writer to the overthrow of the dynasty which the foreigner had imposed on us. I accept this accusation as an honour to myself, and a glory to song. To obtain for it such a distinction, none know what obstacles I had to overcome. How often have I been obliged to struggle against the chiefs of the Liberal party—men who were anxious I should accept their protection, in order to confine me to their timid combinations.

I have seen myself abandoned by many of them at the most painful moment of the conflict; and they did not return to me until they saw that the applause of the multitude continued faithfully to follow me. The revolution of July was not necessary to enable me to judge the political tendency of the great men, whom we had produced for ourselves. I have often lamented over it with Manuel, who was more than once obliged to defend me against anathemas, which so far as they regarded myself, only excited my derision, even when they were carried so far as to deprive me of the support of the journals. Disinterested men, who take part in

political movements, much require to have faith in the people. This faith has never abandoned me.

The success for which I was indebted to song, enabled me to appreciate my good fortune in having seen the failure of all my other attempts. If my preceding essays had obtained some public suffrages, it is probable I should, like so many other young men, who precipitated themselves towards a goal which was far beyond the reach of their strength, have disdained the inferior style which has obtained for me the suffrage of my contemporaries; for, in my opinion, the utility of art is that which sanctifies it. No doubt, the failure of so many projects and plans left some disappointment behind. No doubt, the high pretensions of my youth have tended to dispel all illusion as to the literary value of my successful efforts. But it is not the less certain that, naturally inclined by sentiment and by character to consecrate my talents, whatever they were, to the service of my country, I have fulfilled the humble task which was marked out for me.

I must, nevertheless, acknowledge that when I was nearly forty years of age, a singular idea crossed my mind. Tragedy had never inspired me with any powerful attraction. It was the only kind of poetry which I would never attempt. The idea, however, occurred to me of trying my strength at it, in

consequence of having made it the subject of conversation with Talma, whom I was always so happy to meet. I expatiated to him on the study of the Greek tragic writers, quite as true as, and much more poetically true than the Spanish, the English, and the Germans, apart altogether from the consideration, that in a *naïve* comprehension of art, they appear to me to have the advantage even of Corneille and Racine. Allow me to say, however, that the latter have produced that which I shall call the *théâtre resumé*, the most difficult of all, that in which the poetry is almost entirely in the composition. This remark enables us to understand the expression of Racine, when he said, "My play is done, I have now only to compose its verses."

In fact, they sum up in five very brief acts, for the benefit of our moral mature and sentiments, a whole life, a whole passion, a whole character, as well as the rival or imaginary events with which their action is connected. This is the highest poetry possible in the drama. It is astonishing that this has not always been acknowledged with regard to Corneille and Racine, while no one denies it in respect to Molière, who, it is true, had arrived at a degree of perfection much higher than that of his two contemporaries. The drama of events, *(le théâtre chronique)*, in which the scenes simply follow each

other in the order of some historical, legendary, or romantic traditions, is the infancy of art, and all the genius that may be found in Shakespeare ought not to prevent us from adhering to this statement. Such was the source in which Schiller sought for his model. In a dramatic point of view, I doubt whether he found any advantage in it for his glory. I have said that in consequence of weighing the criticisms addressed to the pale imitators of our great masters, I began to compose, and that in less than a year, several plays on a plan in which I sought to unite, not the burlesque with the heroic—that barbarous alliance which Shakespeare himself would reject at the present day—but the familiar with the heroic. It is the familiar in which our great tragic poets are deficient—less, however, in the case of Corneille than of Racine—because their subjects had reference almost invariably to the aristocracy and the court. The unities of place and time had always shocked me less than the uniformity of tone.

I was anxious, then, to see if it were possible to deliver ourselves from these restraints to the advantage of the natural, and of dramatic effect. A *Count Julian*, a *Death of Alexander the Great*, an *Episode of the Civil Wars of Italy*, a *Charles VI.*, a *Spartacus*, conceived according to this system, and bearing no resemblance to pieces already composed

on some of these subjects, afforded evidence, in my opinion, that it was in our power to open up a new path in this elevated style. Supported by the authority of Corneille, who, notwithstanding the decrees of a pedantic academy, and the remarks, frequently absurd, of Voltaire, has introduced into his pieces a Nicomedes, a Prusias, and even a Felix, I went so far as to compose the verses of several scenes, in order to satisfy myself of the excellence of the method. But I soon abandoned these, as I had so many others, although I was enabled to reap the benefit which accrues from a useful and amusing study. Who knows? song may, perhaps, have gained something by it.

In the career which I have followed, the counsels of others have, of course, been necessary to me. I have taken more than I ever asked. I mean that, instead of going to ask advice, as so many others do, in order to obtain not counsel but praise, I gave my attention, when I was requested to sing, to the slightest words, and the least signs of those who listened to me, in order to discover the passages which required change, correction, or entire erasure. I, however, made a selection of some critics, always of an age less advanced than my own, considering that there would be more advantage to gain from them. About the time of my introduction to the public, Henry de la Touche several times made judicious observations to

me, which were of great service. I have, consequently, frequently referred to this true poet, who was a great composer of Operas. I have often called him the inventor of André Chénier, of whose works at least one half must be referred to him, for I have often heard Marie Joseph deplore that there were so few fragments fit to be published among the manuscripts left by his brother. One singular circumstance is, that the verses placed at the end of the volume, and which the gaoler is supposed to interrupt, have not opened the eyes of cool judges. However, every one in the present day knows that these verses were the composition of De la Touche.

When I reached old age, I had also recourse to the counsels of a man whom I had seen in his childhood, namely Merimée, in whom we find combined one of the most distinguished intellects of our time, solid and extensive knowledge, and a strict appreciation of the language. He has made me pass some uncomfortable nights in correcting a few unfortunate little verses. These are proofs of friendship that we cannot expect from all our friends. There are some people who are inclined to regard in a favourable light everything that is done by those whom they love. Lebrun, whose benevolence is so great, is a little of this character. I have always, therefore, rather distrusted his approbation, which, however, did not the less excite in my heart both pleasure and gratitude.

I have yet to speak of my publications.

I had been warned at the office of Public Instruction, that if I had any more volumes printed, I should be regarded as having resigned my situation. This was an obliging form, which M. Petitot employed to let me know that a second volume would lead to my dismissal, and, at the same time, a premium offered to my docility.

I did not on this account send a smaller number of my new songs to the *Minerva*, a journal of very great reputation. Its proprietors, who were all friends of mine, wished to assign me a share of their profits; but I refused, considering it ridiculous to make friends pay for verses which I was so much amused in composing. I did not reason in the same way with regard to my songs in volumes, because the public was free to purchase them or not. A great deal of time was necessary before I could complete a second volume, having never composed more than fifteen or sixteen songs in the year, some of them in a few hours, but the greatest number with deliberation and care. But many years were far from being so abundant. The time of their composition was a matter of caprice; and I have known eight or nine months pass without the production of a single verse, even at the time when I was most diligent. Now that the tree is old, the fruit becomes gradually more and more

rare. And what shall I do, when it begins to fail altogether? Doubtless, I shall die.

Notwithstanding the feebleness of my voice and my ignorance of music, I sang frequently at that time. If, under the necessity of procuring for myself support in the struggle which I had to sustain, I had at first confined myself merely to living in the world, I soon afterwards carried into it that enthusiasm which is natural to me, and that gaiety which often confers on the mind a confidence which it could not always derive from reason. I did not require to be too much pressed to sing my unpublished productions, either in the company of my friends of the Opposition, or sometimes even in the presence of men attached to the Government. It was a pleasure to me to serve the latter with the forbidden fruit. MM. de Barante, Guizot, Siméon père, Mounier, and many others, could speak of this circumstance. They have heard me at table, beside M. Angles, the Prefect of Police, favour them with the *Bon Dieu*, the *Missionnaires*, &c., &c. One day the latter received a report, in which he was informed that I had sung in the house of M. Bérard, a friend of his own and mine, some of my anarchical songs, as they were then called. The Prefect had a good laugh at this; he had been present at the dinner. It is evident that song still enjoyed certain privileges, and that, at this epoch the Prefects of Police were sometimes men of sense.

At length, in 1821, I was able to get two volumes, containing both old and new songs, printed. I have already mentioned that this involved the loss of the modest employment, by which I was enabled to live without much labour, and in which I was surrounded by friends; for notwithstanding my candour, which was somewhat caustic, I have always had the happiness of seeing those with whom I lived attached to me. But it suited me better to sacrifice my situation in this manner, than to publish my seditious volumes after they had deprived me of it, an event which might happen any day. Their publication in these circumstances would have assumed an appearance of vengeance, which did not accord with my character. Besides, the Liberal party was in the greatest disorder. Their unfounded hopes had just vanished, and the leaders of the Opposition appeared to be seized with a kind of panic. The moment was, therefore, well chosen, since the appearance of my volumes, which had been long expected, and the trial which everything seemed to prognosticate, and which was to adorn them with gilt edges, as I said at that time, might be the means of again slightly stirring up public opinion, which a trifle can discourage, and a trifle can again raise. Several liberals, and those of the most wealthy, who had incited me to this demonstration six months ago, now wished to prevent it.

As I was publishing by subscription, such an individual who had inscribed his name for an enormous number of copies, at the same time encouraging me to have more than ten thousand printed, now signified to me at the last moment that I ought not to have them printed at all, or to withdraw his name from the list of subscribers. But nothing arrested me. On the contrary, I was the more convinced of the necessity of this shot of an advanced sentinel, in order to awake the Liberal camp, commanded in such a strange manner by those who had the honour of passing for its most vigorous chiefs. Manuel thought as I did; and thanks to my friend M. Bérard, and to some other faithful ones, my two duodecimos, printed not without some difficulties by the house of Firmin Didot, appeared in October, in an edition of ten thousand five hundred copies.*

The publication was made on my own account. I was compelled, therefore, to superintend the sale, in which my old friend, Béjot, rendered me so much

* I must here observe that Sébastiani and Casimir Périer were among the number of those who did not withdraw their support from me in these circumstances. Although I was never on very intimate terms with the latter, I have always found him an excellent friend. If I put myself forward as a political man, I should have something better to say of his ministry; to which, in my opinion, sufficient justice has not yet been rendered.

service. I was witness from hour to hour of the rapidity with which the sale went beyond all anticipation. I had contracted a debt of fifteen thousand francs, the expenses of impression, and I no longer ventured to put any confidence in the punctuality of subscribers. I experienced, therefore, a wild joy when I found myself in possession of these fifteen thousand francs, which had filled me with dread, and which I imagined I should never be able to realize by my little books. The sums which succeeded produced but little effect on me, in comparison with that of the fifteen thousand francs. To the former, however, must be attributed the circumstance that I was enabled to live from that day without employment; for I have ever since been able to provide for all my wants, and for the wants of those whom I found so much pleasure in admitting to a share of my moderate resources. Perhaps this little fortune may not have been enough to keep me always out of embarrassment; but I have had, as I take pleasure in repeating, excellent friends, who, watching incessantly over me, have prevented me from again falling into the sufferings of poverty, to which my too great facility in giving might have led me. It is wealth to have few wants and many friends. That no one has better felt than I.

The judicial prosecutions, of which I was the object, made so much noise at the time in which they

occurred, as to justify me in speaking succinctly of them here. In his suit, the *Avocat-Général* Marchangy, a literary man of some reputation, who had his fortune to make at the *Palace*, and who made it at the cost of the four heads of the serjeants of Rochelle, manifested, in the course of the prosecution against me, great talent, sustained by the desire to render my condemnation as rigorous as possible. This good-will towards me often involved him in absurdity, as when citing the *Bon Dieu*, he exclaimed, "Did Plato speak in this manner of the Divinity?" This apostrophe appeared so much the more out of place, since it is plain that the *Bon Dieu* of the song is that of the Fetichism of the old devotees, and not the supreme intelligence before which I have always prostrated myself, as several other pages of the incriminated work had already testified.

The details of this audience, which was celebrated at the time, have been preserved. The crowd was so compact, that the Judges were obliged to obtain entrance by the window, and the accused was almost unable to reach his place at the foot of the tribunal; although, like a certain rogue whom they were leading to the gibbet, he repeated, "Gentlemen, they cannot begin without me." The beautiful defence of Dupin has been preserved, and shows the amount of gratitude I owe to my illustrious advocate:

who never, on any occasion, gave proof of an eloquence more pointed, more abundant, and more witty. Only I cannot avoid expressing my conviction that, in the interest of his client, my defender was too intent on diminishing the importance of song. And, in this respect, my vanity as an author, and my attachment to the species of poetry I had adopted, led me to think that the accusation bore more directly on the end I had proposed to myself, in giving to my productions a literary value, which Dupin was anxious to disguise. In a case of necessity, the pride of the versifier would rise even to heroism! "I would rather be hanged by my adversaries than drowned by my friends," I said. It was not, however, the less wise in my advocate to use such means, in endeavouring to save me from the long imprisonment with which I was threatened. Besides, it was only at a later period, that the quality of poet was accorded to the song-writer—and, strange circumstance! the English were, I believe, the first to give me this title in the *Edinburgh Review*.

A Judge, whose name it will excite some surprise to find here, exercised his influence in a favourable manner for me in this first affair, the result of which was, that I was only sentenced to three months imprisonment, and a fine of five hundred francs. I mean M. Cottu, that ardent champion of aristocratic

opinions, and, in all other respects, the most honourable of men, the best and the most disinterested of the royalists. He procured the exemption of the *Vieux Drapeau*, as presenting a case not foreseen by the law, from the condemnation which applied to the others. The consequence was, that a new law against the Press soon closed the avenue by which the greatest of my crimes had been enabled to escape the talons of Marchangy, I do not say of the Judges, for they all appeared so well disposed towards me, that M. Larrieux, the president said, in his summing up, which was filled with praises of me, that it was a pity the gravity of the tribunal did not allow them to sing the works against which the prosecution was directed, as singing might constitute a good excuse for them. If they were not sung, however, during the deliberations of the jury, many copies were taken of the verses which I had composed in honour of my expected condemnation, and several of them found their way even to the bureau of the *Greffier* and of the *Avocat-Général*.

I passed the three months of my detention at Sainte-Pelagie very gaily in the chamber which had just been left, after two months stay in it, by P. L. Courier, another dealer in sedition, who was not so badly treated as I was by the Restoration, but whose end was so much to be regretted. I had several

worthy companions, condemned for political offences; among others, my friend Cauchois-Lemaire, a man of true merit, who, after having had to suffer so much in exile and in prison, was very inadequately recompensed for it by the Revolution of July,

It would be ungrateful on my part if I forgot to mention, that, in addition to the numerous visits of such as were led merely by curiosity, and of those who are always disposed to follow the multitude, I received, on the occasion of my first detention, no less numerous testimonies of a sincere and altogether patriotic interest. These testimonies of sympathy, and the noise which my condemnation made, were all that was necessary to enable me—and, perhaps, to enable the chiefs of the Opposition also—to form an estimate of the influence which my songs were calculated to exercise.

I have known people whom the prospect of imprisonment alarmed. It had no terrors for me. At Sainte-Pelagie, I had a warm and healthy chamber, sufficiently furnished; while the lodging from which I had taken my departure was destitute of furniture, exposed to all the inconveniences of cold and moisture, without either stove or chimney; in which, at more than forty years of age, I had only frozen water in winter for all purposes, and an old sheet in which I muffled myself up during the long nights when the inclination

to scribble rhymes came upon me. Assuredly, I could not but find myself in a much better situation at Sainte-Pelagie. I, therefore, exclaimed to myself sometimes, "The prison will spoil me!" To those who, remembering my situation of two thousand francs, may be surprised at the poverty of my lodging in the city, I shall reply in the words of my favourite axiom, "Those who are not selfish must be economical."

During my detention, the legal authorities directed a new prosecution against me, which was stirred up by M. Bellart, the *Procureur-Général*. The ungrateful man! During the Hundred Days, I had been requested to use my influence with M. Regnauld de Saint-Jean-d'Angely, with the view of inducing him to obtain information with regard to the Emperor's intentions as to M. Bellart, who had been one of the most ardent instruments of his overthrow in 1814. M. Regnauld engaged with great zeal in this matter, and authorized me to say, in reply to the friends and relatives of M. Bellart, that he might remain at Paris without fear. He did not avail himself of this information, it is true; but he could not be ignorant of the steps I had taken. In one word, a question of jurisprudence was the principal matter of consideration in this new trial, which was occasioned by the publication, through the instrumentality

of M. Dupin, but under my name and for my advantage, of the documents of the first trial. The case was a new one; and the most enlightened men had approved of this publication, by which I was enabled to complete my collection, which had been mutilated by the judgment pronounced against me, in publishing, with each new edition, the examinations in which the songs and the condemned verses were included. The Bar perceived the tendency of this attempt, and I again returned from prison to take my seat on the bench, with Baudoin, the printer—Marchangy being again my accuser, and Dupin my advocate. Never did a client, gratuitously defended, cause more embarrassment to his defender—for I ought to mention, that Dupin only consented to undertake my cause on condition that there should be no question of fees—an act of generosity which was repeated by Barthe on the occasion of my last trial.

Did the publication of the various documents connected with the process, and read during the trial, constitute a repetition of the offence? Such was the question which was to be submitted to rational consideration, that, on the occasion of a public trial, the first comer may, just as the *Gazette des Tribunaux* constantly does, avail himself, at his own pleasure, of the whole proceedings, and of all the documents connected with them. Our Bridoisons of the Bar did not so

understand it, and Marchangy did not blush in sustaining this additional accusation directed against me. What devotion to personal advancement! He was punished for it this time, however—his talent was at fault; and the jury, by a majority of a single voice only, it is true, gave the triumph to the powerful logic and the forcible arguments of Dupin, who was assisted in this affair by Berville, to whom the cause of the printer was entrusted. The worthy son-in-law of the good Andrieux, my venerable friend, gave expression, in the course of his pleading, to an eulogium in my favour, which, even if it had not been so frequently reproduced, should never have escaped from my memory.

If the jury, which, at this period, was on the point of seeing affairs of the Press altogether removed from its jurisdiction, had yielded to the efforts of Marchangy, I should have been condemned to two years imprisonment, at the very moment when I had only two days longer to remain at Sainte-Pelagie. My acquittal was a cause of rejoicing to me, chiefly as a check to the law against the Press, since the publication of the documents connected with all similar trials gave us the power of multiplying, to any extent, the works hostile to our adversaries. I afforded a proof of this myself in 1828, on the occasion of my last trial. On the day when the judgment of condemnation was pronounced in the Correctional Police, all the new

condemned songs were reproduced in the evening journals, which assuredly were not liberal. Charles X. having shown both surprise and displeasure on seeing his own gazettes give to my songs a far greater publicity than my ten thousand five hundred copies could have given, one of these papers considered itself under the obligation of explaining that the judgment obtained in 1822, rendering this reproduction inevitable, the journals of the Government had only anticipated by a few hours those of the Opposition. The royalist sheet did not add that it had also some pecuniary interest in thus anticipating them.

It has been calculated that, in consequence of this repetition of the condemned songs in the journals of Paris, and of their reproduction in those of the departments and of foreign countries, several millions of copies of verses, the circulation of which they had designed to paralyse by their interdict, were made in less than a fortnight. It was a good lesson for those who are so obstinately bent on fettering the liberty of the Press. The author who had been prosecuted, however, took good care not to manifest any vanity at the result. But if the breath, which swelled and bore away his frail balloon, was not that of glory, it was, at least, that of a generous and patriotic opinion, of which he might well show himself proud.

In 1825, I committed a third volume to the hands

of the publisher, Ladvocat. M. de Villèle ruled at that time, and I calculated that this statesman had too much good sense and tact to think of subjecting me to a new trial. Will it be believed? I considered myself bound by this consideration to manifest less hostility. Nevertheless, the publisher and the printer were harassed by the police, in order to obtain my consent to some retrenchments. For their sake I consented to make a few, which appeared to me of no importance, but I resisted the long and numerous solicitations to remove the *Couplet d'Envoi* to Manuel, which forms the termination of the *Esclaves Gaulois*. What course did the publisher Ladvocat take? Five or six thousand copies were printed without the couplet and some other passages, which the police had erased without my knowledge, and the remainder of the edition was left as I had insisted. Having been informed of this falsification on the very day on which Ladvocat gave a great dinner, to celebrate the appearance of the volume, I declined to be present at it, notwithstanding the prayers of the poor publisher, whom I ought to have pardoned for being more alarmed than myself at the prospect of an imprisonment, which might ruin his house. He did not, however, escape a trial, in consequence of the seizure of some copies, which did not conform with the one deposited according to the demand of the

law; but the affair was managed in a very quiet manner, and without any reference to me, proving that I had formed a correct appreciation of the minister who was at the head of affairs.*

From 1825 to 1828, living constantly in the midst of political society and of its most renowned chiefs, it was frequently necessary for me to give them proofs of my independence and candour. I saw how far the nation had advanced in intelligence beyond its *coryphées*, who believed themselves to be its *élites*, as most political assemblies seldom fail to do, although their belief is rarely well-founded, and certainly was not so at that time any more than in the present day. Several of these gentlemen thanked me for the assistance I had endeavoured to afford them; I answered, "Do not thank me for the songs I have composed against our adversaries; thank me for those I have not composed against you." God knows there might have been some good ones, the outlines of which have often occurred to my mind. In return for the

* In this trial, a printer asserted that I had broken my word to my publisher and the *Journal des Débats* appeared to insist on this fact, which was completely erroneous. I might, in my turn, have instituted a little trial against the false witness and the journalist, but I have never liked noise, and I have always depended on the good sense of the public to make rectifications of this nature.—*Note by Béranger.*

letter, the Government, I believe, would have readily pardoned me all the others.

Thus appreciating the greatest number of our tribunes, to live amongst them was a kind of duty which I fulfilled. The case was different with regard to the youthful society which crowded around me. I have been indebted to it for many beautiful hopes, which have not all been deceived. I have beheld the birth and the growth of fine and noble talents, and of acts of devotion, which, notwithstanding the deceptions of life, have preserved their vitality. I have witnessed the rise and development of social and philosophical ideas, which, when one day freed from inevitable errors, will promote the amelioration of this poor world, the pretended civilisation of which is yet little more than barbarism.

If young men have always sought my society, it is because I was always able to comprehend, to encourage, and sometimes to enlighten them; although I must acknowledge with pain that I have learnt more from them than they could have learnt from me. The hope of being interred by men of greater worth than ourselves is a delightful satisfaction to a friend of humanity. I still maintain this assurance; and if it is occasionally shaken by various circumstances, how many others re-establish it at the very moment when I am trembling lest it should vanish from my sight.

If it had been in my power to return to my corner, there to dream and to rhyme, I should have done so when Manuel, whom I lost on the 20th August, 1827, died. A painful malady, by which the last ten years of his life were troubled, brought it to an end when he was fifty-two years of age. It has been stated, that his days were shortened by popular ingratitude. Nothing is less true. In addition to this circumstance, that Manuel was not the man to see the people only in the society of the salons, or in an electoral body of a hundred and fifty thousand individuals, whose capacity may be measured by centimes, he was well acquainted with the fact that more than one college would have re-elected him in 1824, had it not been for the disgraceful intrigues of several of his former colleagues—some of whom were jealous of his superiority, and others alarmed by the flights of his patriotism, which often led them further than they had any desire to go. He knew of these unworthy, underhand dealings; but, too proud to seek to baffle them and make them public, he could not be surprised when he saw that his name did not issue from the electoral urn. If he lamented this for the sake of our cause, as an abandonment of principle, he had reason for congratulation almost so far as regarded himself, as his opposition in the Chamber would have been henceforth too isolated to be of any service to the

country. He would have been repulsed from it again, without finding in the deputies of the *Left* so much zeal in defending him, a circumstance which the opposite party would not have failed to represent as an evidence of its own progress. There are certain dramas which, with us Frenchmen, must not be twice played. In everything, our enthusiasm is soon exhausted. The most influential of his colleagues saved him from the embarrassment of a second expulsion; the risk of which he would not have hesitated to face. Several of those, to whom the direction of the elections was entrusted wrote to La Vendée that there could be no doubt of his re-election at Paris, and on the other hand, letters which they had got written for the purpose, were shown to the electors of Paris, in which the honour of this re-election, represented as certain, was claimed for La Vendée.

Manuel regarded with pity so many acts of baseness. He supported, like a man who anticipated such a result, the oblivion to which the electoral body abandoned him for four years. He did not cease to benefit by his wise counsels those who had betrayed the national cause in his person, and, on his death-bed, he repeated to me several times, with expressions of grief, "You believe in an approaching revolution. I believe in it also; but, my friend, where will France obtain men to govern her worthily?" And I ought to

make the observation that Manuel was a man whose modesty was far too candid to entertain the belief that, as regards capacity, he was superior to those of whom he entertained so little hope. That was one of the errors of his intellect.

His premature end recalled the recollection of his services and his virtues. Thiers and Mignet, who with me, were present at his last moments, published, in spite of the cavils of the censorship, articles in which their faithful attachment called the regrets of France towards the tomb of our eloquent friend. His funeral procession, which took its departure from the Château de Maison, where Manuel had passed his last days, was led by M. Laffitte, General La Fayette, and a great number of other deputies. The respect in which his memory was held was more particularly displayed by the immense concourse of people that crowded the exterior boulevards, over which we had to pass; our entrance into Paris having been interdicted by superior orders. In this we are made conscious of the difference which the Government made between Manuel and General Foy, whose funeral obsequies did not meet with any obstacle within the walls of Paris, even when the hearse was drawn by the youth of the various colleges. The people being desirous of rendering the same honour to the expelled tribune, an army of gendarmes immediately appeared ready to

put us all to the sword, if this enthusiasm were not repressed. The people persevered, and it was necessary to come to a long parley in order to avoid a massacre. Between the brutality of the soldiers and the energetic protestations of the crowd, M. Laffitte displayed a self-possession and firmness, by which a presage could be formed of all that he showed himself to be in the days of July, 1830. In order that our progress might be uninterrupted, it was required that we should again put the horses to the car, on which the dead body was conveyed,—a very little demand after such an exhibition of force. It is true that that of the people had been very much increased during the discussion, and that the number who took part in the funeral procession amounted at least to fifty thousand. We reached the grave; several orations prolonged my torture: for to the man who is lamenting the loss of one who was dear, and whose mind, oppressed with grief, is no longer under the sway of political pre-occupations, those noisy public funerals—this display of eloquence—this absence of all tears in the eyes fixed on the remains of a friend to whom we would pay the tribute of our last adieu in the most profound silence of thought is, indeed, a torture.

The erection of a tomb was spoken of; but in this also we could see how great a difference there was between Manuel and Foy. All that we have since called

juste milieu (the golden mean), words which might have been invented at an earlier date, the bank especially, was eager to subscribe for the erection of a mausoleum to the General, and to assure a fortune to his children. All the long purses refused to open for Manuel; and it was only with great difficulty that nine or ten thousand francs were raised by subscription.

Several of his rich friends neglected to lend their aid in it, as they had neglected to procure for Manuel, by honourable means, a position of sufficient ease.* He left little except what he had economized in his profession as an advocate practising at Aix, and as a consulting advocate at Paris. He made very little in this last position; for as soon as he was appointed deputy, he refused all fees for his consultations, which he no longer gave except as acts of favour, under the pretext that a deputy cannot be a paid advocate, without giving occasion for doubts of the loyalty with which he fulfils the office entrusted to him; the deputy being often under the necessity of speaking and voting on laws, which may have relation to the interests of his clients.

* I read in an ill-disposed article, full of errors, of the *Biographie Michaud*, that Manuel had an inclination for the gaming table. The man who could write such a falsehood, must have had a great antipathy against a person. In regard to games, he was fond only of those that required corporal dexterity, the chase being his great passion.

By his will, he left me a legacy for life of a thousand francs of yearly income. He had not reflected on all the family burdens which he transmitted to his brother, who was well worthy of this portion of the succession. I, therefore, renounced the legacy, notwithstanding the entreaties of the brother, from whom I requested only the watch of the poor deceased, and his hair mattress, on which I sleep. But the younger Manuel* acted in such a manner that, notwithstanding the renunciation, he always succeeded in carrying out the intentions of the testator, and even in going far beyond them. As his personal position has very much improved, I have ceased to offer any cavilling opposition to the course of this excellent friend, whose attachment towards me is equal to that which I have still preserved for the memory of his excellent brother.

If this death did not break up my relations with the chiefs of the Liberal party, some of whom had become my personal friends, as Dupont (de l'Eure) and Laffitte, it created in me a much greater necessity of contracting relations with the youth, whose more liberal and generous ideas harmonized better with my peculiarities of thought and feeling. I experienced this in 1828, on the occasion of the publication of my

* The younger M. Manuel, a few days after the death of Béranger, requested that these articles and some other *souvenirs* might be given back to him. His desire has been granted.—*Editor's Note.*

fourth volume. The minister Martignac, having succeeded in bringing about a sort of truce, and even in effecting an agreement between a great number of the *Left* and the *Centres*, they were anxious to throw impediments in the way of the publication of this volume, the appearance of which threatened, as they said, to trouble the apparent harmony of these gentlemen.

The more they preached silence to me, so much the more did I feel the necessity of breaking it, protesting thus in my own way against a fusion (that was the word of the moment) which led public opinion astray, and might serve to the establishment of the principle of the legitimists. I had by this time acquired sufficient influence to justify the hope that my attempt would not be without some success. The volume caused great scandal, especially in the ranks of the high Opposition party, several of whose chiefs believing themselves on the point of becoming ministers, calumniated me at a distance, without discontinuing to offer me their hands when we met. If I have not actually made any of these great political pretenders the subject of my songs, I possessed a wit, the sting of which they regarded with alarm. It was necessary to be completely armed in the calling that I followed, and when circumstances required, the epigram and sharp words did not fail me. This was one of the deficiencies of my young days, which I have

never been able to correct completely. My communicative gaiety, rendering the success of my pleasantries certain, the latter have, perhaps, been no less useful in a certain sphere of society to the popular cause than my songs.

Certain of having to appear before the tribunals on account of this fourth volume, which made many of my friends make such grimaces, I hastened to pay a visit to the excellent Dupont (de l'Eure), and in order to enjoy the fresh air, I wished to spend some days alone at the sea-side. I was informed at Havre of the commencement of the prosecution. Immediately, therefore, quitting Dupont, who was alarmed on my account at the consequences of this new affair, I returned to Paris, where certain good people were in the belief that I had gone abroad. Dupin lost no time in writing to me that he would come immediately to undertake my defence. But I thought it my duty to let him know that, as he had now become a deputy, he could no longer possess the liberty necessary to the advocate of a *seditieux* of my character, who would not hear of any concessions.* On this occasion, my case was undertaken by Barthe, who conducted it with an affection and a devotedness, that the errors into which

* A letter published by M. Dupin in the *Presse* of the 3rd August, 1857, is calculated to introduce some confusion of facts. The text of the *Biographie* should

in my opinion he has since fallen, and from which I wished it had been in my power to save him, have not induced me to forget. He was one of the best men whom I have known and regarded with affection. Can I allow myself to be severe in my estimate of him

not require illustrations, but even the *Moniteur* has afforded, under the Restoration, the most distinct evidence of what Béranger here says.—*Editor's Note.*

To the Principal Editor of the Moniteur Universel,
Paris, 14th Nov. 1828.

Sir,—An article of the *Journal de Rouen*, relative to the proceeding that has been instituted against me, contains so many inexact statements injurious to me, that, notwithstanding my repugnance to making the public a party to that which concerns me, I pray you to have the kindness to insert the rectification of these errors in your next number. M. Dupin did not, of his own accord, give up his intention of defending me. In answer to the zealous offers of his friendship, I made the first objections to him myself, and these were founded on his actual position as a member of the Chamber of Deputies. These reasons, however, were not sufficient to shake his determination; they only appeared to him to merit consideration. But, at a later period, a circumstance, having no connection with my objections, occurred to give them a new force.

Some journals had made the statement, that I had not had my new songs printed until I obtained M. Dupin's assurance that their publication would be attended by no inconvenience. The journals asserted that he had corrected the *proofs*, and had added his approval *(mit le bon à tirer)*. Being absent from Paris, it was too late before I became acquainted with this asser-

and of many others—I who pushed them on to superior employments; a perilous path in which men of feeble and unsteady character could scarcely avoid going astray. Ah! which of us has not failed? If there are any who are reported to have never fallen, the reason is that their descent was made when no one was paying any attention to them.

M. Laffitte, with the feelings of a devoted friend, fearing that my health might probably suffer, in con-

tion, which appears to have been accredited, for it is repeated even at the present day. Notwithstanding its absurd improbability, and its complete want of truth, it placed M. Dupin in a false position, even as an advocate, since in defending me he would have appeared to be defending his own cause. His words would have lost all their usual authority.

We were both struck with this; and then only I obtained his consent to the transference of my cause to the hands of M. Barthe, equally a friend of mine, and whose fine talent was such as to make M. Dupin perfectly secure as to the result of my defence. M. Dupin, moreover, has not ceased to take the deepest interest in my affair, both as a counsellor and a friend.

The details which the *Journal de Rouen* adds, with regard to my agreement with M. Baudoin, are equally inexact, and although published with a benevolent intention, I owe it to myself to prevent their unfavourable influence.

I never thought of conferring on my publishers the power of imposing their will on me as to the publication of my songs, and I must say that they have always left my choice free, without any examination on their

sequence of a long imprisonment, had used his influence with the ministers to bring about a favourable arrangement on my behalf. I requested him to discontinue all further steps of this nature. It was my determination to abide by the result of the trial. "Take care," he said to me; "if you should die in prison, you will not obtain the sepulchre of Foy; you will only have that of Manuel." "Even a more modest one would suit me better," was my reply; "I have never been particular about being well lodged."

part. It is supposed, in the article which forms the subject of this denial, that M. Dupin must also have approved the agreement made between M. Baudoin and me. I assert that this act has never been submitted to him, and that it is no more true that it has been submitted to his consideration than that the proofs of my collection have received his corrections.

You will pardon me, sir, for the length of this letter on account of the sentiments that have dictated it. If honour had not made it incumbent on me, the friendship which unites me to M. Dupin, the gratitude with which I am penetrated for all that he has done for me, and for all that he is disposed still to do, impose on me the obligation of laying these explanations before the public. I ought to prevent it from falling into an error, the result of which would afflict me much more than the two trials to which I have already been exposed, that which they are now preparing against me, and all the other insults to which I am every day exposed.

Receive, &c.,

(Signed) *Béranger.*

I have never been able to understand, but in an imperfect manner, the arrangement that was proposed—a very extravagant one it was, without doubt. The following is the manner in which it was laid before me by Laffitte, who had only a limited comprehension of the matter. As the correctional tribunals were at that time charged with the judgment of affairs connected with the Press, the promise was made that, if I would submit to a judgment, without pleadings, in default of appearance, I should be sentenced to only the smallest punishment. This was the way in which the authorities wished to avoid the debates, and the noise they would make; and thus, doubtless, they trusted to be able to escape the reproduction of the condemned songs. All this would have been a great advantage to our adversaries. Of course, as every one must conclude, I refused; and did it in such a manner that they insisted no more, except by laying before me the prospect of many years in prison—a prediction which fortunately was not accomplished.*

Compared with the effect which this trial produced,

* Béranger might have dwelt at greater length on this part of his history. No sooner had he received intimation of the step which M. Laffitte had taken with M. Portalis, the Keeper of the Seals in the Martignac Ministry, than he took up his pen and wrote to his friend the letter which the reader will now peruse.

what were nine months of imprisonment and a fine of ten thousand francs to me? Notwithstanding the example given by Laffitte, Bérard, Sebastiani, and several others, who accompanied me to the tribunal, many of my great political friends considered it prudent still to abandon me. But finding that they had been deceived in their calculations, they came to visit me at La Force, the prison I had chosen, when

The following is an example of the manner in which this man, so prudent, so thoughtful, and so modest, could, when it was necessary, manifest his courage, boldness, and dignity.—*Note by the Editor.*

To M. Jacques Laffitte.

My Dear Friend,—You must not imagine that I am not grateful for what you did yesterday. I can strongly assure you that it has much affected me, and that, regarding it in that light, I had no occasion for hesitation. But I was under the necessity of pondering over all that you have said to me, and I cannot conceal from you that this step causes me much anxiety. I am persuaded that it must also have cost yourself some care; but without entering into this matter, which in fine could only add to the value with which I regard this new proof of your friendship, let us consider what advantage I can derive from the arrangement in question.

No, no; I owe it to my own character, to the public, to my advocate himself, to protest against this manner of proceeding. As to being condemned to the *minimum* of punishment, what is the advantage of that? Is it of any great importance to myself? Quite the contrary; and, the more severe my punishment is, so much the more odious, in the first place, will the author of my

the accession of M. de Polignac to the Ministry had at length completely convinced them that they had no longer anything to hope from the Bourbons, as I had constantly proclaimed both in conversation and in song.

I could easily have obtained permission to pass my nine months in a *maison de santé*; but far be the

condemnation appear. If, therefore, I have only six months in prison, I give you warning that I shall adopt every imaginable precaution, in order to avoid both the malady and the alleviation of that sanitary asylum. A longer detention would, doubtless, render me less haughty; and see, therefore, what I should gain by all your arrangements! The shame of having abandoned a defence, the principles of which may be useful, dissatisfaction with myself, and a check, perhaps, to this popularity, which they would in vain seek to deprive me of, and which is necessary to the development of my talent.

There is not a word to say against it, my friend; I am popular; my popularity is great, at the least. Do you know that in the cafés, in the markets, everywhere they are far more interested in my trial than in the Prussians, the Russians, and the Turks?

You know me sufficiently well to be assured that it is not the desire of scandal and of noise which incites me. The proclamation of a useful principle is the matter at stake, and it must be defended with courage. Both my duty and the honour of my character are concerned in this affair. In vain has your friendship proved to me that which I already knew very well: namely, that I was carrying on war at my own expense, and that the more severe the blows which they were

idea from me of ever making such a demand. I might not have been without grounds for such a request. I was in a state of great suffering during the first four months of this imprisonment. But when one has taken his stand in a contest with government, it appears to me ridiculous to complain too loudly of the blows it inflicts on you, and bad

preparing to inflict in my name should be, the more I should myself be exposed to a thousand petty acts of vengeance. My reply to you is; "It is my duty! As to my health, which you invoke, you have too unfavourable an opinion of it. Be of good cheer! I have a hard life."

With regard to money, captivity will have very soon exhausted it. I know that everything is dear in prison; but, in fine, if my purse is empty, I know how to fill it again; you are at hand.

I shall then do that which your offers, reiterated a hundred times, have not yet made me do. I shall request you for money when all my own shall have slipped away, and I shall not even ask it under the form of a loan, if your friendship is so exacting. You see that I forget nothing.

Once more consider that, according to the project which you submitted to my consideration yesterday, that if the authorities appear to withdraw from public prosecution, the accused also retires before the power which his defence might offend. Suppose for a moment that you represent the public, and ask yourself if, in the case of your being the witness of such a comedy, you would not endeavour to discover its concealed springs, and if this discovery would not to some extent diminish the esteem and the interest with which you

policy to furnish it with an opportunity of showing itself generous in lessening their force.

Perhaps I thought so because, as I have already said, this prison life, in a corner specially set apart—this life, cloistered up, regular, with its long evenings, is not without a certain charm for me. It is by no means suitable for youth; but I was more than fifty years of age when I had my first experience of it. At this age I

regarded the accused. Believe me, my dear Laffitte, there are moments in which the most retiring man is under the necessity of exaggerating his own importance, and, in my opinion, I am at present in one of those moments. Let us, then, take the matter in its worst light. I am sent to prison for several years. Then, I may be allowed to believe France will utter a shout of indignation. Let us go further: I die in chains. May I not also be allowed to believe, that for half a century, at the very least, my death will continue to be a bloody reproach on the memory of certain individuals, and are you aware that that would be the most terrible accusation which could be directed against the memory of Charles X.? I have sacrificed too many of the blessings of the present to that indescribable vain love of glory and of virtue to think that you will not excuse my folly in regarding things in such a light. Examine then, my reasons—weigh them well, and reflect particularly on the purity of my intentions and the exact situation in which I am placed. Tell me, in truth, whether your opinions are not rather those of a friendship which is alarmed, than the counsels of cool and tranquil wisdom.

Tout à vous de cœur. Your friend,

Béranger.

may have asked myself sometimes, if I was not born for the convent. But no! there is no moral liberty there, and that I cannot dispense with!

The greatest misery of these houses of detention, and it is sometimes frightful, is the spectacle of irrecoverable misfortunes, incurred by imprudence, and of those degraded natures which are there encountered. Who would believe it, however? The misanthropist would not discover there the greatest number of arguments against the poor human race. But, in revenge, the philosopher would meet with terrible ones against the laws by which we are governed, although they are far from being so imperfect as those by which our fathers were oppressed.

During my imprisonment I was subjected to a severe disappointment. My young friends were desirous of opening a subscription for the payment of my fine, which, with the justiciary expenses and the war *décime* amounted to eleven thousand, five hundred francs. I foresaw the little success this project would meet with. The people were wearied with subscriptions. Then the working classes, under the impression that my friends, the bankers, would lose no time in discharging this political debt, took no part in the matter. But the bankers, extremely generous in words, are accustomed to obtain the honour of everything at the least possible expense. I was not ignorant

of this, and I had made arrangements that these gentlemen should not be subjected to the tax. I should also have liked to avoid this obligation to the public, which is somewhat banker-like in its nature, and is very ready to assume to itself rights over those to whom it opens its purse. I did not venture to say this at that time. This subscription, thanks to the zeal of the young people, was not a failure. It was very near by being one, however; and but for the assistance of M. Bérard, who completed the sum, I should have been obliged to add my own mite.

After the Revolution of July, the Committee of Relief for the assistance of those who had been condemned under the Restoration, proposed to make me the allowance of an annual sum of six thousand francs, as my share of the indemnities granted by the Government. I refused; there were other victims whose necessities were far more pressing than mine. The working-man, the father of a family, whom they detain in prison, is far more to be pitied than the literary man, who even under bolt and bar, isolated as he is, can still pursue his labours to attain for himself reputation and fortune.

It will be perceived that I am speaking here only of imprisonment in France, and not of that which is the lot of the political prisoners of Austria and Russia of the Pope of the Turks and of other uncivilized nations.

It was at La Force, that V. Hugo came to make my acquaintance; and soon afterwards brought with him Sainte-Beuve—Alexander Dumas also came to me, illustrious from his first theatrical success. Their visits were the reward of all the combats in which I had engaged in behalf of the literary revolution which they and their friends had ventured to attempt, and which, after all, was only one of the consequences, a little delayed, of the political and social revolution. The retrograde tendency of some of the ideas of this school, which was long kept at bay by our old and young liberals, had not prevented me from applauding the eminently lyric genius of Hugo, and from admiring the meditations of Lamartine, with whom I had no intimacy till a later period. I had experienced infinite pleasure in the works of M. de Vigny, who treated his subjects with as much art as taste, a talent not at all common among us. I comprehended all the extent and all the delicacy of M. Sainte-Beuve's intellect, and, with everybody else, I prophesied great dramatic success for Dumas.

It was in vain to urge the objection that this school had often proved false to the democratic principle, which had first launched it on its career; that insults to our glory had often proceeded from its bosom; that they had outraged Napoleon dying at Saint Helena; that the services rendered by philosophy were not

acknowledged by it; all of these circumstances that ought to have wounded me more than any other person. "But," I replied, "among us who begin to speak and write so soon, a start is invariably made with the ideas of others, without allowing ourselves time to satisfy ourselves of their relation to our own sentiments, a circumstance, which I may parenthetically remark, accounts for the change of opinions of so many superior intellects. Now, our writers of the Romantic School are all very young. Let us pardon them, then, for those errors, an explanation of which we ought to require only from those by whom they have been nurtured. They do not the less compel our literature to give a more frank expression to things modern, of the present day, and completely French, which, as in our political assemblies, we have too long rendered with the assistance of expressions borrowed from antiquity, or in a language altogether hostile to the proper word, such as that of which Delille may be regarded as a model. Wait! They vainly attach themselves to the past—they will come to us—the language which they speak is conducting them on to our idea." They would not believe me; but the predictions were not the less fully accomplished. Language! language! It is the soul of nations; in it their destinies are read. When, then, in our colleges, will they seriously teach French to the

pupils? When will they introduce a *cours raisonné* of the history of the language from the time of Francis I. until the present day; not for the purpose of explaining our authors, but for the purpose of explaining by means of these authors, the echoes of their age, the progress of the language, its first uncertain steps, its deviations, its rest, and its progress?

Since I am in the vein of speaking on language, I wish to mention how greatly I admire the poem of Jocelyn, which, in this respect, without regard to all its other beauties, appears to me a truly marvellous work. No doubt very great talent is displayed in the *Chute d'un Ange*; but I have never observed—as is the case in Jocelyn—how profoundly the style, which we call *racinien*, enters into all the details of domestic life in all its shades. Never has this species of verse adapted itself with so much facility and truth to the most difficult kinds of painting and narration; preserving, at the same time, all its elegance and harmony. This is a great advance for our poetry. Henceforth it may express and depict everything.

I am aware that in Jocelyn there are many negligencies of style, and much tedious description, but it is so full of very great beauties, that we may easily excuse a few blots, which, moreover, it would be so easy to erase from it. If such a poem could have come to us from beyond the Rhine, or from the

other side of the Channel, we should not have had a sufficient number of voices to proclaim the miracle.

It is time to return to prison for some hours still.

The police were afraid that my exit from La Force would be made the occasion of some noisy manifestations in the neighbourhood of this prison. As I had quite as great a dread of them as the police, I had taken care to mislead my friends regarding the day of my deliverance. The Governor was not the less careful to awaken me at an early hour, in order to "*put me to the door*," as he said to me with a smile. I was again free after a captivity of nine months, and I walked about on the Boulevards with as great indifference as if I had just left my own house, by which an idea may be formed of the facility with which I could submit to a change of circumstances. It must be evident that I have no pretension to represent myself as a fit object for commiseration. Old age, however, was drawing on.

This last affair threw a new lustre over my life; and as the dynasty was every day, by its errors, discouraging its most devoted and able servants, the number of those, who testified their good-will to me, necessarily increased so much the more. Chateaubriand had always been the object of my reveries. How great was my joy when, on his return from the embassy at Rome, I was informed that he desired to

make my acquaintance. The poet, who had discovered the *song* in such a humble position, might indeed be proud to see that it had succeeded in attracting the attention of the author of the *Martyrs* and of the *Génie du Christianisme*. This was the highest literary recompense that I could obtain. In the works that M. de Chateaubriand has published since that day on which I grasped his hand for the first time, he has always testified to the public the greatest good-feeling towards me. One circumstance which he will not make public is, that having been informed, two years ago, that I was suffering from a want of money to such an extent that I was obliged to make retrenchments even in that which was necessary, he lost no time in opening his purse to me, at the very moment when he himself was obliged to sell the retreat which he had made for himself in the *Rue d'Enfer*. I was tempted to accept his offer, not for the purpose of making any use of it, but in order that we might be under a mutual obligation. I did not do this, however, because my habitation is twenty leagues from Paris, money cannot be sent and returned without considerable expense, and at the present time, he is, doubtless, debarred from costly pleasures as well as myself, to whom, indeed, they were scarcely ever allowed.

On a copy of his *Études Historique*, which he

presented to me, the author of *René* addressed to the author of the *Bonne Vieille*, a couplet which I will introduce here:

"Ainsi que vous je pleuré sur la France;
Dites un jour aux fils des nouveaux preux
Que je parlais de gloire et d'espérance
A mon pays quand il fut malheureux
Rappelez leur que l'aquilon terrible
A ravagé mes dernières moissons;
Faites revivre, au coin d'un feu paisible,
Mon souvenir dans vos nobles chansons."

In addition to this title to glory, which I am anxious to preserve, why am I unable to append some letters from my illustrious and excellent friend, Lamennais, who, as well as myself, would be so pleased if we could complete the course of our old age together! In his letters also would be found a proof that, although often setting out from the most opposite points, men of sincerity may one day meet in alliance under the banners of their native country and of humanity.* This is a powerful reason why, in the struggles of opinion, we ought never to allow ourselves to indulge in hatred or insults against individuals, from the moment that we can discover in them adversaries of good faith. If a bad heart, but a fine intellect, doubtless, has said, "Let us act towards our friends

* See Appendix.—*Editor's Note.*

as if they should one day be our enemies," a man of worth has corrected this horrible maxim in this manner, "Let us act towards our enemies as if they should one day be our friends." These words I have often repeated to myself. As to the word enemy, I avail myself of it simply because it offers itself, for I have never applied this name to any one; on the contrary, I might have given the name of friend to too many persons, if I had been of a disposition to lavish it, and to yield to every advance.

I have even had the reputation of refusing almos all the invitations which were addressed to me from all quarters. The great lords of the ancient noblesse who supported liberal opinions have, among others, never been able to attract me to their company, and I said one day to the respectable M. de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, who had the kindness to reproach me on this account, "Monsieur le Duc, believe me, it is not a ridiculous democratic humour which prevents me from accepting your invitations. I am sensible of the honour you do me; but my dictionary is different from the one used in your saloons. Until I had studied yours page by page, I should be only a fool or a mute in your society." I have always, in fact, been accustomed to conform to the manners and the tone of those with whom I associated; certain not to return to them when the dis-

guise cost me too much. I might also have said to the Duke that I had never been at ease with people whom I did not know, at least by name. They completely occupy my attention until I have divined their character, and thus prevent the free flow of my intellect. M. de Rochefoucauld accepted my excuses with such cordiality, that, being desirous, in 1818, of requesting me to compose a song for the purpose of celebrating, at Liancourt, the departure of the foreign troops, he requested an appointment with me, either at my own house or at a café. It may be supposed that I lost no time in proceeding to call upon him at his own house. I thought of treating the subject, and I promised him that, if I composed the song, he should have a present of it for his patriotic fête. As soon as the *Holy Alliance of the Nations* was terminated, I sent it to him, and was rewarded with many expressions of gratitude. As he was one of the administrators of the hospitals, I inserted in it this wicked distich:—

"J'ai fait pour certain Duc un chant qui n'est pas mal;
Je suis sûr désormais d'un lit à l'hôpital."

The bed at the hospital was not yet to be despised.

Our liberal, ancient nobles, notwithstanding the voluntary suppression of titles and even of the particle, did not the less continue to be, almost all of

them, to some extent dukes, marquises, and counts; and I know one of them who, while extolling the Agrarian law, the preaching of which is attended with less expense than the practice of charity, has instituted several little prosecutions against his neighbours for the preservation of the feudal services, which had long been settled by mutual composition.

Several great lords of imperial creation, poor satellites, extinguished since the fall of their sun, assumed an air of *hauteur* not less amusing. It only required a little court favour to transform it into insolence—which did not prevent several of them from being very polite with me after the days of July. During the Restoration, they would not have dared to speak to me, under the dread of compromising themselves. But when Charles X. had fallen, I had some influence, and these gentlemen sought in every direction for aid and counsel, with the view of being reinstated in their eclipsed grandeur. Several of them even went so far as to insinuate themselves into the faubourg Saint-Germain, in order to obtain the ratification of their new titles by the ancient noblesse. The infidelity of these noble *parvenus* to their plebeian origin has made me less tolerant towards them than towards those, whose prejudices may be attributed to ancient blood and to education. I believe that the

entire nation formed the same opinion. Proceeding to Compiègne, which the Emperor and his suite had just quitted—this was, I believe, in the year 1808—I fell in on the road with an old peasant woman, who, with a joyous countenance, comes up to me and says, "Ah, sir, I have seen him at last."

"Who, then?" I said to her, pretending not to divine her meaning.

"The Emperor! the Emperor!" she replies. "He returned my salutation. He salutes every one. He is not like those lords who are about him. One can easily see that they are only *parvenus*."

The poor woman did not see a *parvenu* in the man, whom glory had raised to such a height. Nor did the people; but, with the exception of the great military names, they had very little esteem for the personages of this court which was so brilliant—in which, however, many men of high capacity and a great number of illustrious names of the ancient nobility figured.

La Fayette, a man possessed of an equal benevolence towards all, at least apparently, had completely thrown aside all the pretensions of his caste. If any recognised in him the great lord of former days, it was, perhaps, by the too great care which he took to make others forget it. Notwithstanding the marks of friendship which he constantly showed me, I had

never gone to visit him at his château of Lagrange, where every one wished to have been, whatever invitation he may have had the kindness to offer me, or however much Manuel may have insisted on taking me there. I suspect, too, that the heart of the General is not without some resentment, in consequence of my neglect. Why should I not make a confession? I had doubts as to his political capacity, and I reproached him, because in the last moments of the Empire, he did not imitate the noble example of Carnot. I knew that during the Hundred Days, wise patriots, and among others Dupont (de l'Eure), believed that they had reason for directing some grave reproaches against him. All this, perhaps, confirmed me in my refusal to visit him at Lagrange. Then I felt that for me, in my position, to be too intimate with him was to enrol myself in his party, an alternative which did not quite suit my independent disposition. I have been blamed for it, doubtless. I blamed myself; and, notwithstanding what I have just said, no one has more completely acknowledged the purity of La Fayette's intentions, and the immense services which he has rendered to liberty. But I obeyed my instinct.

I have at all times had too much dependence on the people to approve of secret societies, truly permanent conspiracies by which many lives are uselessly compromised, and which give rise to a multitude of

petty rival ambitions, and subordinate the interests of principle to particular passions. They are never long in engendering distrust, which leads to defections, and even to acts of treachery; and finish their work, when the working classes are invited to join them, by corrupting instead of enlightening them. I could bring forward proofs of all that I advance here. I have known all the effects that these societies have had, or I have at least known enough to justify me in affirming, that they are only adapted for nations struggling under foreign oppression. But for the service which La Fayette may have believed this political *cortège* would one day render him, this great citizen would doubtless have thought as I did; for I not only refused to become one of the *Carbonari*, but I endeavoured to persuade many of my friends, and among the rest Manuel, from joining this association. The Revolution of 1830 has proved that, in a country where the manners of the people, whatever be the form of government under which they live, always assure a certain amount of liberty, there is no necessity either for secret societies or for conspiracies, in order that the people, when their day comes, may make known their will. The society *Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera*, which acted ostensibly, has alone rendered undoubted service to our cause; for notwithstanding all that has been said and written by the legitimists,

no plot, no secret affiliation directed the generous insurrection by which the elder branch of the Bourbons was overthrown. I have even met with people who were surprised that the victory had been obtained without their assistance. I may be believed in this matter, for I was in a good situation at that time to know all that took place, and I am equally well situated to-day to speak the truth. The Government of Charles X. alone conspired against itself at that, moment; a fact, however, which does not imply that for many years, certain ambitious men had not formed projects and made preparations for a certain course of conduct. In 1824 or 1825, the Duke of Orleans said to one of his friends, "Come what will, I shall not quit France unless they drive me from it." A short time after this expression, through which we obtain a glimpse of so many things, M. de Talleyrand assured the very same friend that, by the relations which he had maintained with the English tories, he had a certain knowledge that a revolution in France would not be regarded unfavourably, if it went no further than a change of persons. There would, perhaps, have been something in this to make those who urged on this revolution hesitate, if Charles X. had not rendered it inevitable.

This leads me to speak of M. de Talleyrand, and of the few occasions I have had to estimate this man by

his renown. He had several times expressed a desire to meet me. "Why do you not invite him to dinner?" said one of my friends, who knew what to think of it, to him. "I am too great a lord to expose myself to a refusal," he answered, smiling. He requested Laffitte to procure him the opportunity of dining with me. This was in the beginning of 1827. I had at length an opportunity of seeing at my leisure this personage, who was the object of so much curious observation. I was, therefore, at first, all eyes and all ears. He was aware of the fact that several, years before, when I was indirectly solicited by a certain person in power to compose a song against him, I had answered, "I shall wait till he is minister." Doubtless, he did not esteem me the more for this; and, in like manner, was very little embarrassed by the prejudices which he must have believed I entertained against him, if, perchance, he saw anything more in my humble person than an object of simple curiosity. He made himself agreeable to me, and at once began to talk of politics. It was in seeking to reply to some malign reflections with regard to the Duke of Orleans, now King, that he addressed me in the words, since so often repeated, "It is not some person; it is something." After having met with him several times, I obtained the conviction, that if he had borrowed several witty expressions from others, he could in return make a

loan of many more to them. Wit with him was only the ornament of great good sense, summing itself up in a brief and piquant form. One would have ignored his age and the different parts that he has played, in order that they might have been able to divine all the experience of which his words were the expression, set off by that finished tone peculiar to those belonging to good society, who have made their way through revolutions, and who are never alarmed by the *mauvais ton* of others. It must be acknowledged, that his position gave him an immense advantage in the salons. He took time to reply to every question. He had become an oracle; he was consulted as such; and a thought was even attributed to his silence, which was frequently only ennui and idleness, his besetting vice. In fine, there was nothing elevated, nothing profound, nothing generous in his character. A complete egotist, his private interest has always been the only motive even of his political acts, a fact which is quite sufficient to deprive him of that reputation of being a great statesman, which those who were dazzled by his old titles and his princely luxury have been anxious to confer on him.*

* At the Congress of Vienna he at first played a part so calculated to wound his vanity, that he wished to resign his seat; and it was M. de la Besnardière, whose reputation is still great at the present day in foreign

I shall say no more of this personage who belongs to history. Those who shall afterwards write on our epoch will not fail, I hope, to reduce the pretended capacity of Talleyrand to its just proportions, and to blast for ever the reputation of this *ci-devant* bishop, this great lord, who betrayed France and Napoleon, by whose benefits his high position had been created for him, and who took care to be paid himself, in 1814, for the disastrous treaty of Paris, which was signed to the great surprise of foreigners themselves.

I have now no more to say of myself which can be at all instructive to those who follow the career which I abandoned at fifty-three years of age.

In constant relation with the chiefs of the Liberal party, I have contributed like them, and to a greater extent than many of them, to the events of the

affairs, who made the suggestion to him to demand, by a note, what would be the basis of peace for Austria, if the invasive pretensions of Germany and Russia were yielded to. The Aulic Council, being consulted, declared that, in that case, the Emperor would find it necessary to maintain four hundred thousand men, a prospect which alarmed him as well as several other princes. From this moment, the influence of M. de Talleyrand was very great at the Congress; but he took care not to employ it, as much as he might have done, to the advantage of France. I am informed of this by De la Besnardière himself. This is not the only service of the same nature which he has rendered to the most slothful of men.—*Note by Béranger.*

revolution of July, 1830. After the triumph of the popular over the legitimist principle, I had the conviction that my part was terminated, my task fulfilled It appeared to me that the nation required a period of repose, in order to form a judgment of what it had done; and, with regard to men who were on the point of being intoxicated or rendered giddy by power, I at least recognized from the very first day that I had nothing to do in their society. I proceeded to wait for them in retreat, where several of them must soon unavoidably come again to seek for me.

Many of my friends were anxious that I should aspire to the honours of power. Without considering the obstacle of the *cens*, a tax which I was unable to pay, such a pretension did not at all suit a man, who, from an early period, had been enabled to discover the feeble points of his own character, and to confess that his education had been in many respects superficial. Power is an instrument very difficult to manage, the use of which we must learn by a long course of application before we can employ it well. I was now at an age when the only thing that men learn is to render a better account each day of all they are ignorant of.

If it has happened to me, in some circumstances, to have had the advantage in clearness of comprehension, and in the calculation over events of men far

more enlightened than myself, I know that I have been indebted for it only to my particular position. Little engaged in actual life, completely free from all personal interest, and from every concealed ambitious thought, it has sometimes been easy for me to obtain a more accurate and distinct view of events than that which was attained by many minds that were infinitely superior to me, but which were agitated by passions and desires that I had not. Even the noble ambitions, such as popularity, for example, can throw the soundest understanding into disorder. Let there be no mistake in this matter, then. The advantage which I have enjoyed over many others is that of having been nothing, and having done almost nothing. One must allow the fools to avail themselves of such a honour.

My young friends, the republicans, equally deceived with regard to my capacity, and anxious to obtain a guarantee for their principles, also wished that I should extend my hand for some *portefeuille*.

"What office of the ministry do you wish me to have?" I asked.

"That of Public Instruction."

"Be it so! When I am once in it, I shall force them to adopt my songs as a book of study in the schools for young ladies."

And at these words, my young friends laughed heartily themselves at their foolish idea.

The new Government made the most honourable proposals to me, but I rejected them all, not being one of those who are ambitious of sinecures; for forced labour could no longer suit me, and I should have blushed, having sufficient to live on in the amount my little volumes had procured, to draw pensions from the coffers which the nation replenishes with so much difficulty every year. It is a point of honour with me, that I have never lived at the expense of my fellow citizens, and the proof that this feeling does not arise from puritanism, a false virtue which is so little accordant with my character, is that, as I have already said, I have never hesitated, even since 1830, to have recourse for assistance to the purse of such of my friends as were not political personages.

I shall here mention one of the most flattering rewards which were ever bestowed on my patriotism. On Friday of the great week, a lady, whom I had never known or seen before, making her way through the crowd which encumbered the saloons of Laffitte, comes up to me, and presents me with an immense tricoloured flag. "Sir," she said to me; "I have passed the night in getting it ready; I have been anxious to deliver it into your hands, into your hands alone, in order that you may have it placed on the column." Moved even to tears, and gratefully

thanking this lady, I insist that the homage of this flag be rendered to the assembled deputies. "No, no," she replies; "it is for you—for you alone;" and immediately disappears.

This flag was immediately hoisted on the column of the Place Vendôme by the young men who were the witnesses of this scene.

I, who have received, and who still receive, so many testimonies of popular affection, cannot mention one, the recollection of which is so frequently recalled to me as that of this lady and her flag. May she survive me in order that she may one day see in this work the testimony of that gratitude which I have preserved towards her.

In order not to be exposed to embarrassing requests, and also because I hate to make an exhibition of myself, except in a case of necessity, I thought it my duty to decline appearing in the presence of the new King, who had several times communicated to me the expression of his desire to see me, and even to thank me, a word for which my friends Laffitte and Thiers must be responsible. Having answered on this occasion in a pleasant manner, that I was too old to make new acquaintances, my refusal has been attributed to my opinions. But this is an error. I had never seen the Duke of Orleans, but I knew him to be a man of intellect and sense. When he became

King he could not be ignorant of the fact, that while assisting in those resolutions, of which he had been the object, in those moments that followed the victory of the people, I had been no less nurtured with republican thoughts; but that, being above every thing else a patriot, I had accommodated myself to imperious circumstances, for the sake of the public safety. This was the result of five years' reflection on my part. Having never entered into an engagement with any party, for I have never been a party man, but a man of opinion, I was completely free in this respect. My republicanism, therefore, could not prevent me from making my appearance in the presence of this prince, who, when Laffitte urged this objection to him, answered, doubtless, with a smile, "I am a republican, also." What I dreaded, if I should be presented to him, was that he might insist, in order to prevail on me to accept honours or pensions. Kings, however recent they may be, do not like to be directly refused. The refusal to visit him could only be regarded as the result of my unpolished character; the refusal of his favours might have appeared presumption. Besides, I had no desire to make any display of that which they have been pleased to call my disinterestedness.

After all, what advantage could be gained by the conversations of two men placed in such different

positions, and both having reached an age in which ideas are so much the more tenacious, because they are supported by the pride of their duration. There is every reason to believe, that the king and the song writer would not have understood each other, however benevolent the one might have been disposed to show himself, and however polite the other might have considered it his duty to appear. Should I have put myself forward as an adviser of the crown? But if even my friends, having become ministers, no longer listened to my very humble remonstrances, how would a king have been disposed to receive them? He would have laughed at them; it would have been one of his good days. Reflection would have induced me to laugh myself at the foolish part I had attempted to play, and which so many simpletons have attempted to assume, with what success we all know.

Those who were desirous of introducing me to court said, "People are admitted without ceremony; they appear there in boots." "Very well," I replied, "boots to-day, and silk stockings in a fortnight."

All this was only a trial to my curiosity; for, to an observer, what spectacle could this new court present?

I have kept myself equally distant from all literary honours; and among other reasons, for one which I have been under the necessity of repeating too frequently,

namely in order not to offer an example injurious to the liberty of that style which has been so favourable to me, the importance of which I must be pardoned for somewhat exaggerating. Whatever advantage an academical title might confer on song, the lyric poets will not be persuaded to become the slaves of power, in order to obtain admission to the Institute, which has become one of the ante-chambers to the peerage. The people may still stand in need of satirical songs, and, for my part, I shall not be sorry to have some successors.

A moment well chosen for the attempt to gain entrance into the Academy was at the period when, during the last year of the reign of Charles X. M. de Chateaubriand adopted an exceedingly kind step, (for we were but very slightly acquainted at that time), and endeavoured to persuade me to become enrolled in the number of candidates for the first vacant chair. My nomination, at that time, might have had an advantageous political signification; an evidence of which was afforded by the insults which this step, so honourable for me, brought down on M. de Chateaubriand, on the part of one of the newspapers. I did not yield, however, to the pressing entreaties of the great man, who offered to act as my godfather, if I may avail myself of the expression.

Since the revolution of July, I could not but see

that my admission to the Academy, supposing this body had deigned to admit me, implied the obligation of taking part in public ceremonies, of wearing the embroidered uniform, and of pronouncing, with a sword at my side, introductory orations, in the presence of a numerous audience. Besides, I might too often have to combat with such intrigues of faction as those which afflicted Constant on his death-bed, or which our great poet, Hugo, repelled no less than three times. "But,"—academicians have themselves said to me,—"who compels you to submit to all these *ennuis?* Act as we do, who never put a foot in the Academy." That is the very thing which I cannot comprehend. "What, gentlemen! neglect the duties imposed on me by an honour which I had solicited! No, that would be still more painful to me than the accomplishment of these duties, of which, such is my character, I might ultimately become the slave." So far as my conviction has allowed it, I have always endeavoured to make my position harmonize with my disposition and tastes—a rule which is much less observed than we are generally disposed to believe. The more I have advanced in age, the more strongly have I experienced the necessity of entire independence, a circumstance which ought to make me dread my adhesion to anybody whatever. I can only think when alone, and I

begin even to find it difficult to live any longer except with my own thoughts, when my old friends are no longer with me.

Notwithstanding the inconceivable popularity which has adhered to my name—notwithstanding the suffrages of so many superior men—and the praises which have been lavished upon me even in the theatre, let it not be imagined that I conceal from myself the inconvenience I must submit to in consequence of not being a member of the Academy. I am destitute to-day of that special consideration which it confers on those who belong to it, no matter what may be their title to it. My death will not be celebrated by those solemn honours which it decrees to its deceased members—honours, at which some who envy them pretend to laugh, and which the public by no means regards with an indifferent eye. Who knows but that my conduct, wrongly interpreted, may inspire the Academy with feelings unfavourable to my memory, however short may be the time my memory will survive myself. I am too sincerely attached to letters not to regard this with fear; and I hesitate so much the less in giving expression to this fear here, because it affords an answer to those who have accused me of not aspiring to a chair for the sake of singularity Now-a-days, when only that singularity which is profitable is held in estimation, I should have made a bad

calculation. I moreover declare that if I have not always acknowledged the utility of the French Academy, no one will henceforth be more disposed than I to render justice to this foundation of Richelieu. There is evidence of this in the reproach which I have constantly addressed to its members—in the number of whom I have counted, and still count, so many friends—of not advantageously using the power which it might confer on them in a period of literary anarchy, during which the language requires a pervading and intelligent guardianship, to enable it to resist the barbarisms of the Bar, of the Press, and of the Tribune. Have some not even gone so far as to wish to reinstate the *patois* in honour? The academicians ought not to forget this. The language, as well as the kingdom, required unity, and for that reason, a great minister, eminently national, founded the French Academy.

For my part, the language having at all times engaged a great share of my attention, in spite of, or rather in consequence of, my ignorance, I confess I should prefer far beyond the annexation of Belgium and of the Rhenish provinces to France, to see the Academy, assisted by all the classes of the Institute, at length produce a great and beautiful dictionary, revised every ten years, and distributed gratuitously in all the offices of the Administration, great and

small, and taking its place at the side of our great codes, the utility of which it would then, in my opinion, equal.*

I have only a few words to add to this already too long notice.

On the occasion of the revolution of Poland, as a member of the Polish committee, I had a little pamphlet, composed of four songs, and a dedication to La Fayette, printed. All the copies which the

* It must be understood that I do not speak here of such a dictionary as that which these gentlemen will never finish, and which, it is said, is to contain a history of the words. I mean a dictionary for the use of the whole nation, and of the foreigners who speak and study our language.

It must also be well understood that this great work should be executed at the expense of Government, and that under the Commission, composed of members selected from the different classes of the Institute, there should be a great number of young men employed in the preparatory labours.

The French Academy should hold the pen in the general labour. Copies of each sheet ought to be displayed, before printed in the places of public instruction, such as faculties, colleges, &c., and the Commission ought to examine all the observations addressed to it regarding the contents of the proofs.

As nothing is now done with us from pure devotion, it would also be necessary that the Government should not be sparing of money in this great national work, which it should order to be gratuitously distributed, wherever its necessity was acknowledged.—*Note by Béranger.*

good Perrotin had produced at his own expense, were put into the hands of the committee, who received all the profits of them.

It was not in my power to present my last volume to the public till 1833; but when I did so, I made a promise that I should never again give it any occasion to occupy itself with me. I knew that I should keep my word, except in the case of too great reverses. Since that time I have done all that I could to fall again into oblivion, and to acquire again entire liberty, for reputation also is a condition of dependence, sometimes even a condition of very troublesome dependence; a circumstance the young have very little suspicion of. It would all be very well if reputation were always glory!

Sincerely attached to men of different parties, who had rival interests after the establishment of the new dynasty—grieved by the faults which both parties appeared to be emulous in multiplying—wearied out in vainly proposing a truce for the advantage of France, I took my departure from the spectacle of these sad alternatives. I have sought retreat and silence at Passy, Fontainebleau, Tours, and it is in this last town that I write this notice, which I shall, perhaps, finish elsewhere.

After having entertained doubts of myself during my whole life, it would be cruel to be compelled to

doubt others before my death. Fortunately, I have sufficiently studied the actual movement of the world to draw from it a consoling conclusion, that, notwithstanding the unfavourable predictions to which personal misunderstandings give occasion in every direction, the triumph of equality is preparing in Europe, and the glory of my dear country will be that of having first claimed, at the cost of the greatest sacrifices, the government of the democracy organized by laws to which all must submit. I can, therefore, return thanks to God for the hopes which he gives me in favour of that cause which I have served, and which will have my last wishes and my latest songs.

TOURS, January, 1840.

APPENDIX.

It is to Béranger's letters that we must look for the complete picture and changeful story of his life. The "Biography" is but a sketch.

We have felt it right to group together in this place some pages which Béranger preserved, and which are in the nature of apologies and explanations of this hasty biography; and to these papers have been added a few notes, which render them more complete, together with a *résumé* of some precious recollections. Béranger's memory has no need of praise or defence at the hands of any; but public curiosity demands to know something more than what has been stated in his own brief and modest memoir.

The unity of a character so worthy of esteem, is, doubtless, an object of sufficient rarity in an age in which so many characters have been destroyed by sudden and violent shocks; and it is that this unity may be seen to have been preserved uninterrupted to the end, that we add an appendix to Béranger's memoirs.

The "Biography" concludes, in reality, at the days of July, 1830. Béranger has stated why he was anxious to remain at that time in obscurity, and to be nothing, not even adviser to a Government whose triumph he had assisted, more than any other person, in securing. At that period his active life was brought to a conclusion, and he refrained from any further interference with politics to the hour of his death.

"The Revolution of July, has been also anxious," he said in the preface written in 1833, "to make my fortune; but I have treated it as a power capable of falling into caprices, which it is wise to retain the means of resisting. All, or nearly all, of my friends have had a place in the Ministry; and one or two of them even still hang clinging on the slippery pole. It is a satisfaction to me to think that they are hooked up to it by the skirts of their coats, in spite of all their efforts to get down. I might, then, have had my share in the distribution of public posts; but I had, unfortunately, no love for sinecures, and had a thorough distaste for any kind of work, except, perhaps, that of *expeditionnaire*. Slanderers have pretended that I acted thus from motives of virtue. Rubbish! It was because I was idle."

The course he pursued was one of especial wisdom, and he reserved his old age for the toilsome labour consequent on a charity which nothing—not even ingratitude—could chill.

But although he had withdrawn from the current of politics, Béranger knew very well in 1833 what to expect from the future; and in an admirable letter

to Lucien Bonaparte, he has expressed his ideas on the subject with all the sound sense, grace, and frankness, which might be expected of the poet who had declined to take the advantage of the very moment of success—and of the citizen who, after having laboured so energetically and effectually in the past, desired only for the future the liberty of dreaming.

"Prince,—A serious illness to which I am very subject, and which affects me with frightful headaches, has prevented me from replying as soon as I could have wished, to the letter which has been placed in my hands, not by M. Presle, but by M. Ravioli. I am beginning to recover, and take the earliest opportunity of thanking you for the fresh mark you have been so good as to give me of your remembrance.

"Do you not know, Prince, that the heart of any man more prone to indulge in illusions than myself, would have been excited by your letter to a dangerous pitch of pride? I have fortunately, however, only read your expressions in the sense in which, of course, you intended to use them. Your declaration with respect to the value of my literary counsels, is only an ingenious method of expressing some esteem for my humble talent; and as regards the justice of my opinion on political affairs, allow me to persuade you on this point, also, to make large reductions in your praises.

"Had there not been insurmountable obstacles to my so doing, I should have endeavoured to make a journey to London, for the purpose of expressing my acknowledgments in person to you. I regret that that should have been impossible: for perhaps, in conversation with me, you might have been able, Prince, to turn to profit the impressions received by me during the time I passed with our politicians. M. Lacoste,

a friend of the Count de Survilliers, will be able, however, should he think it worth while, to communicate to you all that I have said to him with respect to the actual course of events, as well as my impression with regard to the future. But I must at once candidly confess that, until very recently, my ideas have been shared but by few others. The Republican papers, indeed, somewhat incline to them; but that, I imagine, is for want of something better.

"There has been a time when young and old alike condescended to ask my advice, and I then became proud; but I was ultimately treated as a mere babbler, and my consulting room is now closed. But if I am no longer willing to advise, I still babble, and it is, doubtless, one of my prattlings which has reached your ears. I may very probably, in fact, have said, and that more than once, that the existing state of affairs might last ten years, and possibly longer.

Before the Revolution of July, I perceived the impossibility of establishing, in a country of equality, the English monarchical, representative system, which cannot exist without the support of a privileged class; and when this revolution had actually occurred, I, an old republican, convinced that France was not yet prepared to accept the republican form, desired that, putting the old monarchical machine to a final use, we should make it serve as a plank, by means of which we might cross the stream; and what I here say to you my actions, as well as words, at that period, have proved to all my friends. I thought, if possible, to assign to this state of transition a duration equal to that of the Restoration. The faults of the new Government have but very slightly altered my expectations, and have much strengthened my hopes. Therefore, Prince, the prediction of ten years of existence, with respect to a throne, which has the appearance of being so weak—if the Republic had not itself committed faults which its position, doubtless, rendered inevitable, we should have been nearer, perhaps, to the *dénoûment*. This party had not yet learned how to

appreciate rightly the character of new France, and thus dreamed of the impossible. It is on the interests created by the Revolution that it must rely at the present day; and these very interests the Republican party has too often appeared to threaten. Fortunately for us other Frenchmen, we know how to discipline ourselves by the blows given us by our enemies, and these blows have never been wanting. The Republican elements are much more abundant than is supposed by those who dread, or even by those who desire, the Republic. But it will be long, in my opinion, before they will be concentrated. In France, we both think and act quickly; but we only act when the movement of ideas jumps with that of the popular feelings; and thus these days occur but seldom in an age. These are the reasons which make me expect, in a time still remote, the fall of the Government of to-day, accustomed as I am to see things on their least favourable aspect.

"I have thought it well, Prince, to point out to you some particulars of my manner of viewing affairs, that you might be able to estimate it at its true value. But I should not be candid, did I not add, that, living as I do, at the present time, in retirement, I am in a position which is, probably, unpropitious to the modification of preconceived opinions. Dreamers, as you well know, should always be listened to with some distrust. Let me add, that, for the sake of the republic of which I dream, I am anxious that it should not flourish prematurely. In fact, my most serious objection to the existing Government is, that it has a hot-house effect upon its growth.

"I am well aware, also, that I have failed to take into account the chapter of accidents; but in speculative politics—the only species with which I meddle—accidents should be ignored. It is in action alone that a certain weight may be attached to them.

"My object has been, Prince, to enable you to estimate my prediction at its proper value, and, at the same time, to

prove to you, that it is the result of candid reasoning on my part, and my conscientious conviction.

"I afford you, as you see, every opportunity of overwhelming me with reproaches of being both a fool and a dotard; and pray do not hesitate to take advantage of them: for I am quite used to that species of abuse. The clever ones accused me of folly during the Restoration; and now the new generation, in spite of the events which, during the last two years, have proved the truth of my prognostics, are as little disposed to give credence to my prophecies. Nor do I esteem them the less on this account; they fulfil their mission, whilst it is mine to preach in the desert—and a very ridiculous mission it is.

"You have appealed to my candour, Prince, and you will perceive that I have answered your appeal. I have allowed my pen to run on at the risk of wearying you, and lowering myself in your estimation, for the purpose of affording you all the documents you could require. And now judge, I repeat, how far you ought to give credence to my words.

"At least, you may fairly regard this letter as a fresh proof of that eternal attachment which I have vowed to you, and an additional reason for believing me always, Prince,

"Your most grateful Servant,

"*Béranger.*

"Passy, 25th May, 1833."

This letter is certainly in several respects a very curious production. Mention has frequently been made of the power of divination with which Béranger appeared to be endowed, and this epistle is a sufficiently remarkable proof of the clearness of this, his prophetic instinct. The poet's political opinions are expressed in it in plain terms; and it is interesting

to find him speaking so decidedly to a Prince who, probably, did not share Béranger's sentiments, and whom the same hope could not satisfy.

Retirement appeared to have the effect of clearing away from before Béranger's eyes the confusion of actual events, and at a distance from them he comprehended them better, and estimated them more accurately.

"It is right that you should understand," he wrote somewhat later to Lamennais, "that I am of no value, except in meditation; for whilst discussion has the effect of driving away all the ideas my brain may possess I have, moreover, a nice conscience, which prevents me from being a party man. I am merely a theorist. But still this statement requires some qualification; for patriotism, a feeling which in me is always young, annihilates my opinions as soon as I have reason to fear that their application would be injurious to my country. I am nothing but a singer of songs, as you know; but believe me when I declare that I am no mere egotist. I am as a hermit who on the strand offers up prayers to Heaven for those who encounter the tempest, regretting at the same time that he himself knows how to handle neither spar nor oar."

His wish, then, was to indulge in meditation rather than to enter into discussion; and whilst he would not sacrifice his opinion, he was anxious to avoid belonging to any party. He believed that the freedom, of which he had secured the triumph, would suffice to educate the people; and his chief solicitude was devoted to its sufferings, sufferings to which he

had dedicated his last songs; and he prayed God as a philosopher, the God of concord and peace, that the hour of tranquillity might as soon as possible enlighten the horizon. He had sung the glorious war of the Revolution, but he could not think that war was holy;

"When each new mortal age its course begins,
The corn fields lie bedaubed with human blood."

He marked the onward progress of science, which continually multiplies its miracles, invents the uses of steam, controls the forces of electricity, and he hoped that the world was at length about to be rightly organized. The insignificant quarrels of the time of the Restoration were already fading in the distance, and now was the time he considered—now, when it was no longer necessary to struggle for rights, to take thought for the masses of the people; to raise them from their state of rude misery, and educate them, so that they might be no longer reduced by hunger, ignorance, and envy, to adore the blood-stained divinities of war.

He desired by these last songs, which are, as it were, a legacy of Peace, to teach us to love one another in all good faith; to lead us by a safe path, to that organization and general emancipation of the world of humanity, of which he caught glimpses in far distant revolutions. In the stir of the Chinese population, in the Chinese emigration which announces to Europe

that three hundred millions of workers are about, sooner or later, to enter the ranks of the civilized community. Béranger saw the advance of a new social era; and to this subject dedicated his last meditations.

And where did this man, whom such mighty dreams inspired, who was at once so proud and so humble—where did this man, we say, seek to give utterance to, or seek publicity for his words? He visited, unostentatiously, the poor; he consoled the afflicted; he opened his purse to supply the wants of the utterly wretched; he raised up the weak and erring.

When the Republic appeared amidst the lightnings of February, as a poet has expressed it, Béranger, who had predicted it, experienced some anxiety, as he saluted its newly-raised flags, with respect to the device they bore. He hoped that events might show the futility of his fears, but he could not allow himself to be persuaded that the wheat was as yet thoroughly ripe for the harvest. People used to repeat at that time one of those *bon-mots* full of good sense, in the invention and expression of which he so excelled:—"We have a staircase to go down by, and here we are throwing ourselves out of the window." In fact, he speedily perceived how much enmity had been excited by imprudence.

Popular gratitude summoned him to become one of the members of the Constituent Assembly of the

Republic; but he could not give the lie to the guiding principle of his life, and take an active part in politics after having so clearly expressed his reasons for wishing to live in retirement. It was in 1840 that Béranger had written to Lamennais the letter of which we have quoted one of the passages above; and was he not, eight years later, still the same man?

In ignorance of his real character, alone, can any blame him for having refused to become a representative of the people, and, perhaps, something more.

In all his thoughts, in all his discourses, in all his letters, may be found evidences of the unity of his character, the clearness of his intellect, and his firmness of will.

To convince ourselves of this, we need only peruse the letter which he wrote to the electors, declining to become a candidate.

"My dear fellow Citizens,—Is it really true that you wish to make a legislator of me? I have had a suspicion of the fact for some time, but I hoped that those who first entertained the idea would have renounced it, out of pity for an old man who has always been unaccustomed to the performance of official duties, and who, to perform them properly, would be compelled to learn at a time of life when to learn is no longer possible.

"Friends have declared that to refuse to take upon myself such functions will be an error. I think the contrary. But, if it be, indeed, a fault, then do you, whom I wish to be free from all faults, avoid following, in this matter, my example.

"That the extent of my popularity may not deceive you with respect to my worth as a citizen any more than it deceives myself with respect to my merit as a poet, pray listen to what I have now to say.

"My sixty-eight years, my uncertain state of health, my character, spoiled by a long, but dearly purchased independence, render me quite unsuitable for filling the honourable part which you wish me to undertake. Have you not already guessed, dear fellow citizens, that I can neither live nor think but in retirement? Yes! it is to solitude that I owe the little good sense for which I am sometimes praised. In the midst of noise and tumult, I am lost; and the most certain method of upsetting my poor brain, which more than once, perhaps, has devised some useful counsel, would be to place me on the benches of an assembly. There, dismayed and mute, I should be trampled under the feet of the strugglers for that tribunal which I am myself incapable of ascending. I can neither attitudinize, harangue, nor even read in public; and for me it is in public wherever there are more than ten persons. An incident of my life which has been more than once wrongly interpreted, will prove to you the truth of what I say.

"A chair in the French Academy, an illustrious body which throughout the world has no rival, is, certainly, the noblest reward an author can desire. Well, this very favour I have constantly declined to seek, because I have been conscious that the peculiarities of my temperament were irreconcileable with the usages of this society; usages which are far from being so absolute as those of a legislative assembly.

"My dear fellow citizens, I have been since 1815 one of the echoes of your sorrows and your hopes. You have often called me your consoler; be not, then, ungrateful. By attributing to me a too great importance, you would deprive my counsels of the weight which they at present derive from my exceptional position. In political struggles the battle-field is covered with killed and wounded. Without reference

to the flag under which they may have fought, I have ever, as a true French soldier, assisted in interring the former, and in tending the latter. If I am once forced to take an active part in these struggles I shall become an object of suspicion to those to whom I shall extend a fraternal hand.

"Do not tear me, then, from the solitude in which, wrapt up in my own meditations, I have appeared to you to be endowed with the gift of prophecy. I have no occasion to cry out in public that I am a patriot and a republican. But, it may be urged, you should devote yourself to the service of the commonwealth. Oh! my dear fellow citizens, pray do not forget how capable this word is of being the cloak of ambition. The devotion which is sincere and really useful is that which endeavours only to teach us of what we are ourselves capable. To the charge of egotism, should it be made against me, the whole tenor of my life will be the best reply.

"Let us now consider the ideas which have occurred to me in my retirement, with reference to the democratic work, the performance of which God has imposed upon France, for the advantage of the other nations, her well-beloved sisters. Should I not always find, it may be asked, sufficient friends in our assemblies to enable me to develop these ideas, should they be really worthy of some attention? Yes, but my timid words would but compromise them; and on those same friends must rest the task of giving them due effect. The vigour of youthful spirits and youthful hearts can alone overcome the obstacles which still oppose the execution of any good work. And will not some of these hearts be open to my influence?

"Leave me, then, I beseech you, dear fellow citizens, in my solitude. I have been a prophet, you say! Well, then, let the prophet keep to the desert. Peter the Hermit was the worst leader of the crusade which he had so boldly preached, although he was accompanied by the brave Gualtier. *Have-nothing*, as the rich men of that time called him.

"Moreover, is it not as well that, in an age when so many persons declare themselves qualified for any position, that some should give an example of diffidence? Nature has qualified me for this species of utility—and it is a qualification which is not likely to excite any envy.

"Finally, dear fellow-citizens, let me warn you not to be deceived by the intoxication of triumph. Your courage may even yet require to be re-invigorated, your hopes may yet need re-animation; and should this be the case, you would then regret that you had stifled under the weight of honours the slight remains of voice I may still possess. Permit me, then, to die as I have lived; and do not transform into a useless legislator your friend, the good old songster,

"Heartily yours, dear Fellow Citizens,

"*Béranger.*"

Few letters have ever been written which excel this in grace and wisdom. But 204,471 voices replied that there was no name more popular than that of the writer, and that the name of Béranger belonged to the nation. Béranger yielded, and entered the Constituent Assembly of the Republic oppressed with mingled feelings of astonishment, anxiety, and embarrassment.

A few days later, finding it quite impossible to continue to put this force upon his inclinations, he besought the Assembly to accept his resignation.

"Citizen President,—I believed it to be my duty to warn the electors of the department of the Seine, at the same time giving very sufficient reasons wherefore that I could not accept the honour of a seat in the National Assembly.

"In spite of the deep sense of gratitude with which I am inspired with respect to the large number of votes by which

I have been elected to this Assembly, I still adhere to my resolution to decline an office for which I have not qualified myself by serious study and meditation.

The step which I have hitherto refrained from taking, that I might not be the cause of a fresh convocation of the electors, having been rendered easy by the circumstance that an invalidated election renders this convocation necessary, I now resign into your hands, Citizen President, the office which has been entrusted to me; and which will not the less remain, in my eyes, the sole glory of my life.

"Have the kindness, Citizen President, to assure the National Assembly of the regret with which I find myself unable to take part in that thoroughly democratic work which I shall have the honour of accomplishing.

"Let me request you to present to the Assembly, and also to accept yourself, Citizen President, the homage of my most profound respect.

"Your most devoted Fellow-Citizen,

"*Béranger.*"

History will declare Béranger to have been in the right. That he was not made for a public career was shown in the whole course of his life; and it was scarcely to be supposed that at sixty-eight years of age, he could do violence to his nature. But, nevertheless, although withdrawn from the Councils of the Republic, he would not have failed to serve it, had the circumstances of the period been propitious.

The National Assembly refusing to accept Béranger's resignation, he had recourse to petition and entreaty.

"Citizen President,—If anything could make me forget my age, the state of my health, and my legislative incapacity, it would be the letter which you have had the con-

descension to address to me; and in which you inform me, that the National Assembly has done me the honour of refusing to accept my resignation.

"The fact of my election, and this act of the National Representatives, will be the objects of my eternal gratitude; and, being as they are, so out of all proportion with the humble services I may have been able to render to the cause of liberty; they prove how noble are the rewards reserved for those who, possessed of greater talents, shall be able to render to our beloved country, services of a more positive nature."

"Happy to have been the occasion of so encouraging an example, and convinced that I can be of no further service, I once more, Citizen President, entreat the National Assembly in the most earnest manner to refrain from tearing me from the obscurity of my retirement.

"It is not as a philosopher, and still less as a wise man, that I express this wish, but as a rhymer who believes that he should, as it were, outlive himself, should he lose, in the midst of the turmoil of official life, that freedom of soul which has ever been the sole aim of his ambition.

"For the first time I now ask something of my country; entreating those who so worthily represent her, to accept the resignation I now again submit to them, and to pardon the weakness of an old man who cannot conceal from himself how great an honour he loses by ceasing to form one of their number.

"Requesting you to present my very humble apologies to the Assembly,

"I remain, Citizen President,

"Your most respectful and devoted servant,

"*Béranger.*

"*Salut et Fraternité.*"

For the first time he now asked something of his country, and his country has not, remembered it to his disadvantage.

In the letter addressed by him to the electors of the department of the Seine, Béranger alludes to his refusal, frequently repeated, to occupy one of the chairs of the French Academy. And as it is an absurd piece of injustice to reproach the Academy for not having numbered him amongst its members, so it would be also unjust to accuse Béranger, with respect to this matter, of over-strained modesty. This quality was, indeed, strong within him; but it was not altogether the motive of his refusal to become an academician.

A letter written in 1840 to a friend of M. de Pougerville, has already been published; but it is in a longer and more important letter written to his friend, M. Pierre Lebrun, that he thoroughly explains the reason of his refusal; and this letter Béranger himself regarded as an interesting item of his story, for he took and preserved a copy of it.

"I only received your letter this evening, my dear Lebrun, and hasten to answer it, being much vexed to find that you are still unwilling to acknowledge the justice of the reasons which prevent me from applying for admission at the threshold of the French Academy. You should, however, be convinced that the reasons are of real weight, at least, with me, and are urged in all sincerity.

"I repeat to you then, that if I had done anything else than simply write songs, I should not consider that there was any objection, literally speaking, to my inscribing myself amongst the aspirants for the chair. But for reasons

too long to state here at length, I think it objectionable to give Academical honours to a species of literature which would lose its effective power when once it became a means of aggrandizement. And shall I, of all men, furnish to those persons who are always eager to depreciate the Academy's selection, an opportunity of running down the kind of writing to which I owe so much, and to which it has been my lot to give a more prominent position than it has ever yet held? Those who at the present day say that my songs are odes, would be the first to exclaim that I am only a song-writer, and that songs are no great things. Acknowledge that it is not for me to assist in proving them to be in the right.

"I must not fail to add, moreover, that it is impossible to enter a society without contracting engagements, the fulfilment of which is demanded as well by duty as delicacy; and I may as well here confess to you that I have a work in my head which cannot be written in an academical spirit. Do you think, then, that it would become me, entertaining as I do this project, to expose myself to commit an act of ingratitude? I already owe too much to you and many of your colleagues. It is because I regard gratitude as a religious duty that I have always dreaded to contract even slight obligations; and you wish me to contract great ones. I have sacrificed every thing to my love of independence;—do not, then, rob me of the fruit of efforts which have often been most painful.

"You are here inclined to repeat, I know, what you have so frequently said, to the effect, that the obligations which the Academy imposes on its members are very slight; and you have cited to me, *apropos* of this subject, the case of La Fontaine, who sought after them. La Fontaine was a good fellow; now I am, I hope, a good man, but I cannot, unfortunately, be in any way considered a good fellow. Poverty and experience have thrust some small amount of philosophy into my brain; and, perhaps, my heart is indebted to nature for some few not unamiable

qualities, since I have never been without many excellent friends; but I have been in the habit of giving free vent to my temper, and it is sometimes, I must confess, neither reasonable nor gentle. Such being my weakness, would it be well for me to venture to place myself amongst men who, although, doubtless, very amiable, must certainly have their peculiar tempers as well as I, and would be unable to accommodate them to mine—accustomed as it is to speak freely, even at the Tuileries, if you remember.

"If you will turn your attention to what my career has been in the world, you will find that I have been little more than an idle wanderer, ever avoiding to form any local ties. If I have at any time met with some worthy fellows in the crowd, I have arranged with them to meet again far away from it, in company with some old and genuine friends whom I have been able to preserve, and in the number of whom you are well aware, my dear Lebrun, that I am so fortunate as to reckon yourself. From those of this circle of friends whom I have found too exalted for me, I have held myself aloof; without, nevertheless, permitting this circumstance of itself to diminish the attachment I had formerly formed for them. And in following this course, my friend, I put in practice a rule, which early in life I laid down for my guidance—a man who has had much to suffer being compelled to be scrupulously prudent. As far as I have been able, I have ever avoided any position which was not in accordance with my character and tastes—and more especially with my tastes, which, perhaps, on account of their simplicity, have been to me as virtue and good sense. And you must not suppose that I am herein at all an isolated case, society being constituted as it is at the present day.

"Foolish persons, or persons unacquainted with me, have supposed, or rather have pretended to suppose, after the revolution of July, that I refused office and honours for the sake of bringing myself into notice; the truth being, as you very well know, I refused to accept office and honours simply because they were agreeable neither to my tastes nor my

character. Besides, have I boasted of my moderation? Have I made the journals resound with the fact of my disinterested refusals?

"A similar error has been fallen into, I know, with respect to the Academy. "It is his pride which makes him decline to enter it," cries one. Can the simpletons really think me such a simpleton? Alas! you know, my dear friend, how very humbly I estimate my literary merits, and with what sincerity I have spoken of them in the preface to my last volume. Would to Heaven I could entertain my friends' opinion with respect to my works!

"I myself only esteem them in so far as they may have been of use to the noble cause of which I have been one of the champions; and I am not likely, therefore, to be intoxicated with regard to their merits. And a man must indeed have lost the use of his senses who could underrate the importance of the French Academy, which has it in its power to fulfil so high a destiny, which already numbers amongst its members so many illustrious men, and may any day become possessed of all the genius whose light at present shines without its walls. What! have we not still the academic chairs of Corneille and Bossuet, of Voltaire and Montesquieu? And was not Cuvier himself one of you?

"But I perceive, my dear friend, that by repelling thus seriously the imputation which they throw upon me, I do but join myself with my accusers against the Academy. If I could be surprised, after that, it is that any one belonging to the Academy, and being my friend, should express dissatisfaction that I do not aspire to become one of its members, when there are actually existing at the presentday so many men of old, and also of more recent reputation, who, although they may not have my own vulgar popularity, could not but be far more valuable additions to the Academy than myself. As for me, poor ignorant fellow that I am, I am endowed with none of the qualities which an academican should possess, and I can, as it were, defy you to find in me the

least fitness for the various tasks and solemn functions which you from time to time fulfil.

"And here let me repeat to you that one of my observations, which has appeared to strike you most forcibly, as it also struck Dupin, when, one day, he pressed me with arguments similar to those used by yourself. I have a horror of making myself conspicuous in public, and am completely incapable, as the author of the '*Maxims*,' of speaking, or even reading for however short a time, in the midst of a numerous assembly; and I am quite sure I could not endure to listen for a whole hour, to a compliment addressed to myself.

"But you have been in a great crowd in the law courts, you reply. Parbleu! Yes, but how could I refuse, when so graciously invited, as I was, to attend them? Had I been able to compound each time for three months' imprisonment, and thus escaped appearing in so numerous an assembly, I should have gone to gaol with the greatest good-will.

"However, in the courts of justice, I have only uttered aloud my name; and you may take it for granted, that even if I could compose a discourse, of which I have great doubts, I should be quite incapable of speaking it.

"But you see me in an embroidered coat, with a sword by my side, going to the palace? Well, a conversation takes place there. 'Sire, I am your very humble servant' —. 'Ah! you have come at last then, you, who have been so unwilling to visit us?' 'Sire, I am your servant.'—'Be off with you, and never let me see your face again,' &c. &c. Ah! my dear Lebrun, can you not understand how perfectly unsuited I am, to attempt to make your customs mine?

"Leave me, my friend, leave me in my retreat, which is by no means that of a mere misanthrope. If the journals blame the Academy, because it does not elect me, ought I to write to tell them, that the Academy is not in fault, and that it is proper that such a society should wait until

the honour of admission into its ranks has been solicited? Dictate what I should write, and I will write it; but in God's name, restrain the friends I still possess (I have lost many, alas!) from endeavouring to force me into the Academy, in any unaccustomed way! for could I imagine, my dear Lebrun, that there was any probability of my being nominated, without any application on my part, I should prefer instantly to pay each of you, including the Archbishop, ten visits, and to wait at six o'clock in the morning, cold as it is, at the door of your office, to have my name put down! An unsolicited election! Is this what you are dreaming of for me? Are you entertaining the idea of bringing me into the Academy, in a triumphal manner, which would be the greatest possible blow to my poor reputation? Do not, I entreat you, let this be the case; and, if you should think proper, read my letter to your colleagues. But yet, I am a fool! and am allowing myself to be frightened at something, which is never likely to occur. No! The French Academy would never debase itself thus, for the sake of a mere tap-room rhymster! How could it ever do for me, what it did not do for the divine Moliere? I am only a song-writer, gentlemen! A song-writer, then, let me die!

"Yet a few words! I can never be brought to entertain the idea of being a slave to my reputation. I have endeavoured as far as possible to live apart from it, and now you want me to follow it into your palace, into which it never had any business to enter. Wait! only wait a little! and in three or four years it is quite as likely as not that this reputation of mine will have entirely disappeared! I shall then, doubtless, be no such philosopher as to be able to regard its disappearance without regret; but you and I, sir, will at least be then freed from any occasion for troubling our heads with it; and you will, besides, have the opportunity of indulging in a hearty laugh at the difficulties I now make on the subject, and at the repentance you may suppose me to feel at ever having made them. But it

is at the same time quite certain that I should appreciate even more than I now do, your real kindness towards me.

"As for yourself, my dear Lebrun, be assured that I shall always retain the highest sense of the kind manner in which you have pressed me on this subject, and that I am sincerely and unreservedly gratified to all the academecians who have desired to have me for a colleague.* As far as honour is concerned, I am already content, and desire no more; save me then from all the rest in spite of any need I may have of the little annuity which is alloted to the academecians, and which I formerly received with so much gratification in the name of Lucien Bonaparte, my first patron.

"With the assurance of my most devoted friendship, believe me yours in heart and for life,

"*Béranger.*"

The arguments which Béranger puts forward in this delightful letter are of a very elevated order. The people's song-writer, the poet of the French Revolution, here proves once more that he understands, better than any one else, his own true part and fortune in life. He is determined to prove that he is worthy of it. And who, then, can fail to understand him aright when he says "I cannot entertain the idea of being a slave to any reputation. I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to live apart from it." Béranger wished to enjoy a life-long freedom, and to live and die according to his own humour.

He wished to be free, and he did not wish to be

* On the first leaf of this precious autograph is written "*a copy of my letter, in reply to that of Lebrun, in which he informs me that it is possible I may be elected a member of the Academy, although I should be unwilling to offer myself, or allow myself to be offered for election.*" (The last phrase only occurs on the copy.)

rich; in other words he wished to be happy. What long ago philosophers taught and poets sung, he wished in his own case to carry into effect. He enjoyed happiness, and he deserved to enjoy it. All doors opened wide before him; but he refused to enter, and remained with the humble.

And what a retirement, after all, was his! besieged, as it was, by glory, lit with smiles, and thronged with gentle visions. The most illustrious personages delighted to enjoy one of those hours which Béranger bestowed so freely on his most humble friends; and, coming from all directions, they forgot, under his peaceful roof, the discords of the world and their own mutual enmities.

Chateaubriand had been for Béranger, from his earliest years, one of those scarcely recognised masters, which, in spite of ourselves, we regard with life-long affection and respect. They never met, it is true, in the same camp; for they fought in behalf of dissimilar principles and ideas; but, nevertheless, they did meet, and it was the courtier — the gentleman—the creator of the romantic school of literature, who made the first advances. The latter it was who first praised* the plebeian poet who threw

* *Under the simple name of* chansonnier, *a man has arisen who is one of the greatest poets that France has ever produced. With genius which assumes the manner of Fontaine and Horace he has sung, when he has chosen, as Tacitus has written.*—Preface to the Etudes Historiques.

down the images of Royalty, and who in a certain sense might be considered Voltaire's successor. Béranger did not conceal the gratification he felt at these praises, and accepted with pleasure this exalted friendship, of which he was still more proud when the course of time seemed to thrust the poet of the *Martyrs* upon the coasts of the World of Democracy. We know how Chateaubriand spoke of Béranger's songs during the reign of the Bourbons, whose fall they helped to accomplish, and we also know how Béranger bewailed in exquisite verse the voluntary exile of Chateaubriand. They continued firm friends; and in his *Mémoires d'Outre tombe* Chateaubriand treated no one so well as Béranger.

In 1831 he wrote him a letter from Geneva, which created considerable sensation when he had it printed at the commencement of a *brochure* on the *New Proposition (M. de Briequeville's) relative to the Banishment of Charles X. and his Family;* and of this letter we may here very properly quote the first paragraphs.

"Geneva, Sept. 24th, 1831.

"To *M. Béranger.*

"Sir,—If your talents were less extraordinary—if the pictures you draw in verse were less distinguished for correctness of design, as well as brilliancy and sweetness of colouring, I should content myself with simply thanking you for the ode you have addressed to me, whilst, at the same time, feeling deeply touched by the evidence it

affords of your good-will; and in that case, also, my tickled vanity would find in this ode something so agreeable with itself as would excite my enthusiasm to the highest pitch. But the tribute which I now wish to pay you is, not that of a feeling of gratitude, founded on gratified vanity, but of sincere admiration. A great poet, whatever the form in which he may develop his ideas, is always a writer of genius. Pierre de Beranger chooses to surname himself the song-writer, even as Jean de la Fontaine has taken his place amongst those who live eternally in the popular memory, under the title of *The Fabulist*. I predict, sir, that your renown, already unrivalled, will still become more widely spread. Few, in the present day, are capable of appreciating the exquisite finish of your verses; few have ears sufficiently delicate to relish their harmony. Completeness of execution is hidden in your poems under the most charming natural grace.

"Let me add, sir, that in the preface to my *Etudes*, considering you as a historian, I have remarked that the following strophe was worthy of Tacitus, who also made verses:—

'Once a conqueror, drunk with great good luck,
Laughed at sceptres, and laws, and all such things,
And we still may see where his feet with dust
Stained the purple robes of degraded Kings.'

"When you sing the praises of the *King of Yvetot* and the hymn to the *Ventru*; when you celebrate the *Marquis de Carabas* and the *Myrmidons*; when you dictate the prophetic letter of a *Little King to a great Duke*; when, to my great regret, you laugh at the *Gérontacratie*; you are a politician after the fashion of Catullus, Horace, and Juvenal. Pardon in me one of the inconsistencies common to human nature. An admirer and extoller of the new generation, I am, nevertheless, devotedly attached to the

Barbons. You have lost, in the sight of justice, the action you have brought against them; would that I could gain one for them in the exalted court of your muse! &c.

"*Chateaubriand.*"

Chateaubriand pleads, we see, the cause of the discomfited Bourbons; and endeavours to incline his old opponent in their favour by flattering him as his new friend. Béranger replied by a letter which has never been published, and which may fairly be regarded as one of his happiest efforts. To what an elevated position had now arrived, unaided by any guiding hand, the former apprentice in the printing office at Peronne! For we finding him bravely holding his own in a correspondence to which he had been provoked by the author of the *Génie du Christianisme.*

"4th October, 1831.

"SIR,—Your letter has affected me greatly, and I have anxiously weighed every word, that I might be able to thank you duly for those which your kindness has induced you to address to me. But oh! sir, why am I not one of those who are able to allow themselves to be easily deceived? However exalted may be the quarter from whence I receive praise—however brilliant the form may be in which it is couched, my only gratification at it arises from my feeling of regard for the person by whom it is bestowed upon me. It never has the power, unfortunately, to alter the opinion I have formed of my own talent. My reputation, extensive and popular as it is, having descended, probably, to ranks of society which no other reputation in France has ever yet reached—my reputation, I say, has in no way altered the opinion I have formed of my productions. I am a good little poet, a clever workman, a conscientious labourer,

whom a few old tunes and the snug corner in which I have taken up my abode have rendered happy, and that is all. That being the case, you may understand how grateful I am to those who may be willing to throw down from their own elevated position a few flowers upon my poor hurdy-gurdy. I say hurdy-gurdy, for whenever I have made use of the word lyre, as I sometimes have, I have always done so with blushes; the fact being that I strike my songs, not out of a lyre, but out of a hurdy-gurdy. Hurdy-gurdy, as it is, however, it has ever been independent, and has helped to afford some consolation to those humble folk whom, perhaps, our high-class literature has somewhat too much disdained. I have somewhere said;

> "When, still a boy, I wandered all unknown,
> And ancient castles met my wondering eyes,
> I never strove to make their halls mine own,
> Or mate their vastness with my pigmy size.
> But to myself I whispered—long ago,
> Those walls lost love, and poetry and song!
> Besides, I am a citizen I know,
> And to the people all my loves belong."

"It is, then, from below, that the sound of my songs has reached your ears; and this fact renders me only the more proud, when I find that some of them have induced you to employ your pen in favour of the *Chansonnier*. I shall have a line in the page of history. From how many great men has even this tribute been withheld!

"The passages of your letter in which you reply to the political portion of my couplets, compel me to lay before you my candid belief on this head. Nor must you complain, sir, of this species of garrulity on my part. Blame rather the interest you have shown in me, although you have known me so short a time, and have so long misunderstood me; and in part attribute it also to the kind manner in which you are pleased to express your regret for this latter circumstance.

"Endowed by nature with an exalted spirit of patriotism, I was cradled in the lap of the Republic, in a country which

had little to lament the misfortunes of '93. When I was eighteen years of age chance threw me in the way of the relics of the Royalist party, and the result was but to attach me the more firmly to what I may call my first opinions. My admiration for Napoleon did not render me blind to any of the inconveniences of the Imperial Government. When *the Restoration*, which I regarded at first with more surprise than dislike, had reigned five or six months, I was able to foresee that it must sooner or later be overthrown. You may well understand, therefore, that my ideas must be now more strongly fixed than ever—so strongly, indeed, that I sometimes think it unnecessary to make them known. So far as I have been able I have assisted in bringing about the Revolution of July, and I rejoice in having done so. It is now long since I adopted the idea that representative monarchies are but a transitory form. Constitutional thrones appear to me to be but bridges thrown over a stream across which we cannot swim and certainly cannot jump. I believe that I thoroughly understand the present generation of the French people; and I consider that its education is far from being complete. The faults of the Restoration afforded it the chief elements; but it wants completion, and that completion it is now, I believe, obtaining. But, nevertheless, the faults committed during the last year are calculated to re-open the lists to all parties. And to you, sir, who, whilst remaining faithful to your own party, have too lofty a character and are too patriotic not to repel intrigues; permit me to say, it seems to me that you must deceive yourself with respect to the consequences of its effects. In my opinion, the hopes which the Legitimists entertain of peaceably inheriting the spoils of the other factions, can only be realized by means of foreign aid. Yes! to succeed, it must once more have recourse to the Cossacks, and, should it tear France to pieces, its triumph will be but a brief one. And at this point, where, I fear, our opinions are entirely dissimilar, I ought to stop. Far be it from me, sir, to indulge in any desire to induce you to abjure the

opinions which you have professed during the whole of your glorious career. You may remember, perhaps, what I had the honour of saying to you on this subject on the occasion of your last address to the Chamber of Peers, and this expression of my song, '*Go, serve the People.*' I never, it is quite certain, exhorted you to serve the Ministry. Ah! sir, I am not fond of assuming the character of a prophet, although some have wished to make me pass for such. But, if your voice were still sufficiently powerful to set a skeleton upon the ruins, you would perceive a considerable augmentation of size in that thicket of tombs amongst which you say, in such touching terms, that your life closes its career. And, lowly as I am, mine might well be of the number; for, so far from fleeing from persecutions, I only fly from those which entreat me to avoid them. Do you not think, then, that it would be pleasant to see you passing by the resting place of the Chansonnier's bones? This hypothesis makes me smile, and deprives me of the gravity necessary to enable me to continue my letter in the serious tone it has assumed. Let us return to songs. The one which I have addressed to you, appears to have given satisfaction. Some printer's errors have crept into the published copy, which Ladvocat will correct in his volume. Since I have received your reply, my regret at not having done better has been much increased. All that falls from your pen, has a peculiar charm, which explains to me far better than talent the influence over me which your works have ever had, and still possess. I am, therefore, grieved that you should in your letter have expressed yourself as very doubtful with respect to the effect of the perusal of your immortal works on my youth. Had it not been inconvenient to express in precise terms in my couplets the nature of this effect, I could not have made use of any more appropriate words than those of a verse which has not, perhaps, been generally understood. And, then, the course of us poor rhymsters is as strictly limited to certain bounds as is that of the horse of the circus. As for

the quotation you make of the *Deux Cousins*, if the readers recall to mind all its verses, they will admire the good taste and grace of this quotation. I must not, however, here attempt to enter into an examination of this letter, which will be no less prized by the public than by myself, but rather conclude my own, which is already too long.

"Hasten to return, that you may convince yourself that I have even there faithfully represented the greater number of your compatriots, and in the meantime accept, sir, the expression of my ardent wishes for your return and the assurance of my entire devotion. "*Béranger.*"

Chateaubriand was an older man than Béranger; he had been, so to speak, the master who had guided his first literary efforts, and the respectful and grateful friendship which Béranger testified for him was sincere, faithful, and constant.

Into the soul of Lamennais, so sadly enthusiastic, and so cruelly wasted, Béranger threw a glance in which were blended both more emotion and greater penetration. He had often attempted to release him from his chimeras, and to convince him of the groundlessness of his fears. No record has been kept of their conversations, but their letters still exist. And how much argumentative and consoling eloquence do these letters display on the one side! How much spirit-torturing and restless eloquence on the other! These two men appeared to hold the same faith in their old age; but Béranger had clung to it from his childhood, and Lamennais had only attained to it after a long and hazardous voyage.

We quote here one of the earliest of Lamennais' letters, in which may be seen how these two intellectual friends conversed and wrote. There is a species of philosophical tenderness in this free interchange of ideas which is not without its own peculiar grandeur.

"La Chenaie, 2nd June, 1834.

"Very good and sweet are your words, my friend, and they have gone straight to my heart. I will bless God who has reserved this consolation for me in my sorrow; and I have had, indeed, as you say, much to suffer. Many men who used formerly to clasp my hand, and many times sat at the same table with me, now pass me by, saying; 'I do not know him.' Some have even thought that I deserved this species of outrage at their hands; and this, as you will readily understand, has been the severest blow of all. But how is it possible to enter into public explanations with respect to such matters as these? It cannot be done, of course; and the evil impression consequently remains; and this is just what the bad-hearted men desire. But after all, one cannot hope to serve one's fellow citizens without encountering much trial and suffering. And no one can know this better than yourself. For have you not been persecuted by those in power, dragged before the tribunals, torn from your home, imprisoned, and exposed to every species of tyrannical abuse? And in all ages this has been the lot of all who love, beyond anything else, truth and justice, and devote themselves to the defence of humanity. Jesus said to his own followers, for the purpose of encouraging them, '*Vous n'avez pas encore resisté jusq' au sang.*' The whole instinct of self-sacrifice is involved in these words, nothing either good or great can be brought to light in this world except through sacrifice. True Christianity is but a sacrifice of love. Turn to the divine drama of the passion of Christ, and you will find that,

whilst no sorrow is wanting to it, the final impression produced by it is of the salvation of the world. What a life was that which began in a manger of Bethlehem, and ended on a cross at Jerusalem! And then suddenly commences that marvellous struggle which is to change the whole aspect of the world—that struggle which continues from age to age—of mind against matter, of right against might, of peoples against their tyrants. Who could fail to be proud, my friends, of taking part in this glorious contest? And who can fail to be rendered utterly forgetful of his wounds in the joy of the triumph, of which the heart, in its depths, is so prophetically conscious? In my last work I gave expression to emotions which I could no longer restrain. In the work on which I am now employed, I shall confine myself to cold and philosophical reason. It appears to me that there is a whole world of truths remaining to be developed—of truths not new, but which, in the growth of the human mind, endeavour to blossom—even as the flowers in spring-time. I believe that the social science, in particular, is far from having, as yet, a perfect theory, and that this theory, when it shall have been formed, will be of great use in hastening the advent of the perfect future. Whatever some may say to the contrary, we are evidently advancing towards a magnificent unity. Let us take courage, then, and hope. And even should these hopes be unfounded, is it nothing to work for one's fellow-men, and to endeavour to lessen their sufferings? And whenever we are sincerely desirous of doing anything, we are always sure to succeed to a certain extent. Let us now exert ourselves, therefore, that when we are no more, our descendants may say of us, "They thought of us—they endeavoured to smooth our path through life." Our lives will not, in that case, have been spent in vain. Adieu, my friend, and believe that if, in common with all the world, I admire you in your character of a great poet, I love you still more as the good man, the defender of the people, and of humanity.

"*F. de Lamennais.*"

Almost all the celebrated men of the age made Béranger's acquaintance. We cannot give a list of these men, but Dupont (de l'Eure), M. Thiers, M. Mignet, M. Lebrun, and M. Cousin, may be mentioned as being among his old friends. M. Michelet and M. Lamartine, who visited him somewhat later than these, were no less cordially welcomed at his modest hearth. Many others of less note surrounded him with their homage; and he even granted both his confidence and his friendship to some of the young writers whom his renown had attracted to his dwelling, and whom his kindness of heart had made at home there.

Béranger has praised in his Biography the most intimate of his friends, those with whom alone he was thoroughly well acquainted—with whom he passed his life, and in whose arms he died. They will be envied both for their vanished joy and the place Béranger has given them in his writings. Time, in fact, will have henceforth no power over them. That future which the philosopher has foreseen, and the generations of humanity which the poet has sung before their birth, will be faithful to his glory. Each successive age will learn to worship his memory, and renew the recollection of the popular pomp which attended his hasty obsequies. Long will fresh flowers flourish on his tomb.

This excellent writer has written in verse, as Jean Jacques Rousseau in prose, uneducated and uninstructed. The story of the one is like the story of the other; each sprang from the lowest ranks of the people; each gained knowledge by intuition; alike they waited long for the opportunity of entering upon their true careers; alike they acquired the most mysterious secrets of their art, and became the rivals of the great masters; whilst at the same time they excited the spirit of their age, and gave it an increased development.

Look then upon this man, who has had no *exemplar*, at the first hour of his *début*, when he was humble in spite of his hope, and incapable in spite of the vigour of his intellect, which was to be at a future time regarded as one of the largest and most enlightened ever known. Nature has given him a generous heart and powers of reason which nothing can pervert. Chance has given him the parentage and education of one of the humblest of the people. Let us add that he comes into the world at a moment when the world is stirred with the spirit of *rejuvenescence*. Suppose, now, he should become fond of poetry, and learn to make verses; that gradually he should learn, by a species of miracle, to write really well; that he should meet with encouragement; that he should have talent; that he should

peruse and re-peruse Molière and Voltaire; that he should endeavour to find or discover a new mode of writing verse for a new age; that he should possess such powers of study and observation as to be enabled to analyse and appropriate as formulæ the bold flights of inspiration; that, finally, the French Revolution should appear to be threatened, and that France should be in danger of losing both its principles and its glory. Under these circumstances he could not be but what he has been. Endowed with the keenness, the gaiety, the good sense of the people, he sported with his youth so long as he remained young; published, at more than thirty years of age, a collection of songs, celebrated for their gaiety; and suddenly passed from the praise of wine and love to satires upon kings; from satires upon kings to eulogiums on the armies of the Republic and the Empire; and by these steps attained to a species of poesy which was at once startling and sublime. Borne on the wings of renown, he has gazed face to face on the future. He has foreseen that which will come to pass in the future, and by flattering their dreams will console those who suffer in the present.

In his first songs, he is not **Panard**, but Olivier Basselin, or, if you please, the fuller of Vire. But soon the epicurean arouses himself. As soon as free-

dom requires a champion, he throws off the chains of pleasure, runs to the people's rostrum, and there inaugurates the dominion of a hitherto unknown poesie, which is at once sonorous, terrible, and grand. His song is not the old *song*, but rather a species of strange lyric ode, which must be sung, however, and not declaimed. It is not, however—as were the odes of the poets who were before him—inaccessible to the understandings of the crowd, for the mass of the people, on the contrary, immediately comprehends it, learns it intuitively, and immediately repeating it, sends it forth into the air as though it were the natural expression of its heart. His song, in fact, is song regenerated, crowned, and roused by the genius of the French Revolution.

His songs have two leading characteristics; the memory of our wounded glory, and the presentiment of an age of universal peace.

We have already said with what care he had prepared, from the period of the Revolution of 1830, and with what energy he thenceforward defended his cherished independence and the simplicity of his retreat. He has himself said, that he hoped to find there both the inclination and, perhaps, the time to become a historian, and neither the time nor the inclination failed him. We have seen what were the reasons which led him to abandon his commenced undertaking. He prepared himself for it, at first, with an

ardour which alone tempered the intense fondness he always felt for the open sky and the beauties of nature.

"I am much touched," he wrote to Lamennais; by "the encouraging manner in which you speak of the work of which I have submitted to you a sketch. Unfortunately, trees and flowers are powerful attractions, and I have spent more time in my garden, than at my desk. Ah! my dear Lamennais, Diocletian was no fool, although he never made songs, I believe; and he was very much in the right, when he preferred his lettuces to the Empire of the World. You pretend that I might be useful in Paris. Well! and did I not remain there as long as I could suppose myself to be of any use to any one or anything? When have I ever refused to give either my services, or my advice? But any little credit I might have possessed has vanished on the one side, and on the other, I have seen neglect paid to my advice—advice, which the progress of events but too fully justified. What could I do, then, but what I have done? In my little retreat I collect my ideas, and pass my observations; and as the struggles of each day do not affect me, living alone as I do, and far from its tumults, I endeavour to devote to the service of my country and humanity, the fruit of a life which has not been without experience, since it has not been without pain."

His resolution was taken, however, not to publish anything more during his life. "And this resolution," he said to his old friend, Perrotin, "I shall only break in case you or I be ruined." He worked slowly, just as he felt inclined, and he never worked in any other way.

In one of the letters written by him to his young friends, occurs the phrase so full of excellent sense:

" I am especially anxious that you should not make me your only model. Remember that I have been a nurse child twenty years with the eighteenth century, and that these twenty years have influenced all the rest." This was, in fact, to say to those who in the name of the new style, blamed so *mal à propos* the classic simplicity and logic of his own, that it was not his fault that he was born in the year 1780, and that his education had given him the tendency to pay less regard to the abundance of words than to their quality and vigour. A fine sense of exactness in all things was the first of his literary instincts. He would not for any consideration have attempted to accelerate his regular method of composition, or to improvise even the most airy productions of his pen.

Nevertheless, how many and long letters has he written to humble correspondents, who demanded of him advice or encouragement! With such as these, he entered into heartfelt relations, treating them as his friends as soon as he found that their want was real. Such letters could, probably, be collected by thousands. One of these disinterested and touching series of letters is already partly known, and consists of the letters written by Béranger to a poor working printer, whom incurable infirmities had sent to the Bicêtre, and who had attempted to help himself to bear up against his misfortunes by making verses.

The series consists of more than thirty letters, written in ten years, and full of an exquisite delicacy and inexhaustible generosity, of which it is impossible to form any idea without perusing them. Béranger at once took an interest in this stranger—enquired of him whether he was anxious to change his place of asylum, and offered him assistance, which speedily took the form of a little pension paid out of the poet's own small income. Béranger's next step was to endeavour to procure for his new friend, a bed at the *Récollets*, and after having made a thousand fruitless efforts, he was at length delighted by succeeding in his object. Nor was this all; for when his protégée had found a better lodging, he spoke to him of his verses, encouraged him to continue to compose them, and took the trouble to correct his style and his rhymes, word by word. He scolded him if he did not send for his pension punctually every quarter-day, or offered apologies for not having himself already sent it. To read any of this series of letters singly, one might well suppose that Béranger was a debtor in arrears, instead of a charitable patron.

This poor poet was not the only one who had the honour of being consoled by Béranger. After his death were discovered many other instances of his secret and prodigal generosity. He was the sole

support to several destitute persons,* and yet never allowed this circumstance to interfere with the casual assistance which he never refused to any who went to ask bread of him. But he was averse to what appeared to take the form of almsgiving, and felt a kind of shame when he met with want so extreme and desperate.

Of his time as well as his money Béranger gave liberally. He made every day, as long as he was able, numerous visits; and whenever he was anxious to obtain for some friend a favour for which he could fairly ask, he did not scruple to enter the abodes of the most opulent and powerful. When M. Laffitte was alive, Béranger gave gifts out of the banker's money chests. "My dear friend," he said, on one occasion, "you will lend 500 francs to X? I know him, and will be his surety. You must also lend 500 francs to B. L. But although I know him, also, I can't be his surety." The sums were advanced without hesitation.

But it must not be supposed that Béranger knew only how to give, for he knew also how to lose—which is a species of knowledge far more difficult of attainment and much more rare. Hereafter will be known what incomparable disinterestedness he displayed on

* He paid, for example, regular pensions of 480 francs to each of two old women—who will continue to receive the same annual sum as though Béranger were still alive.

more than one occasion. The sums of money which he gave away or lost, and refused to attempt to recover, amount to a considerable total.

Béranger, who was unwilling to be burdened with a fortune, and took such bad care of the little income he did possess, was indebted to the watchful care and prudent severity of an old friend for the preservation of his small pittance to the end of his days. He was also indebted on the same score to his publisher, who, in spite of his strenuous objections, several times increased the annual sum which he paid him; Béranger has clearly shown, by making him his executor and sole legatee, with what friendly esteem he regarded him.

Persons who were entirely unacquainted with it, have frequently taken upon themselves to make the public acquainted with Béranger's home. Some have been pleased to describe it as the retreat of an anchorite; and others have made of it an *Abbey de Thélème*. Béranger's home was simply the home of the wise man; the simplicity of his mode of life being at the same time not without a certain grace and frank gaiety which charmed all hearts. It was not until his very last days that Béranger ceased to entertain his chosen friends at his table: for the adornment of which other friends who lived at a distance were proud to send delicate presents. Horace, on the banks of the Tiber, was richer, perhaps, but he could

not have been happier or led a life of greater enjoyment. Béranger made attempts at various periods to live in the country. In 1835 he quitted Passy for Fontainebleau; and he then wrote to a friend to inform him that he should thenceforth live with his old aunt Merlot and Mademoiselle Judith Frère.

"I am accompanied by my old aunt and a good old friend, who would die of hunger if I did not aid her as she herself aided my poverty-stricken youth. It costs less to make one kettle boil than three. I have seen Fontainebleau and I intend to make it the scene of the retreat of my old age. The two women will assist me in managing a home which the little property remaining to me will be sufficient, I hope, to support.

"Pray do not be too ready to admire what you will not fail to call my disinterestedness. You know that I am weary of the world; every day I withdraw myself further away from it; and it is with the world as with the theatre, when once one loses the habit of frequenting it, one ceases to care to visit it at all. Retirement is the object of all my desires. I am anxious to end my days far from the tumult of a society which would at length, probably, render me misanthropical. It is my great desire to be able to preserve my faith in humanity. As for material privations you must know that I am quitting Paris for the purpose of rendering them as small as possible. I wish to secure my sugar and coffee from shipwreck; and besides, when I am far from the world I shall have time to work. Who knows if it be not there that awaits me what I have yet to do?

"You see then that the step I am about to take will not be so much a fall as a simple change of position. I turn myself in my bed—that's all."

Béranger went next to reside at Tours, in a house

called the Grenadière, and which Balzac has described in one of his romances. He soon quitted the Grenadière, which is outside the town, to go to live in the Rue Chanoineau. It was at Tours that he made the acquaintance of the talented and celebrated doctor, M. Bretonneau, who united to a profound knowledge of his art, and a happy skill in its practice, the rarest qualities of mind. A firm friendship sprang up between these two excellent men from the very first moment of their meeting; and M. Bretonneau continued to the last hour of his life to be Béranger's medical attendant. Whenever he was summoned to attend a great consultation at Paris, he never failed to visit his friend and give him the advice his state of health appeared to require. There was, also, an occasion when he visited Paris, on his friend's account solely. It was a few days before Béranger's death, and he burst into tears when he saw that there was no hope of his living.

Formerly it had been Dr. Antoine Dubois who had been the poet's medical attendant and friend.

Béranger quitted Tours because his health, threatened by fever, was not good there; and because his constitution appeared to require the air, or at least the neighbourhood of Paris. We may see in his last songs how deeply he regretted to be separated from his old friends, and how faithfully he had always loved

them. He went for some time to Fontenay-sous-bois, from whence he returned to Passy, where he inhabited a little house in the Rue Vineuse. At a later period he removed to another house in Passy.*

He had now lost his aunt, and his household was under the management of his old friend Judith.

The anecdote-collectors are wrong when they say that Mademoiselle Judith Frère was the niece of M. Valois, *maître d'armes* in the school in which Béranger was brought up, and that her uncle made use of her as an assistant to give lessons to his pupils. The professor of fencing alluded to was named Leval-

* The following are the places in which Béranger lodged from 1826:—Rue des Martyrs (in Marmel's house), No. 21 or 23;—Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, No. 28 or 30;—(1833) Rue Basse, at Passy, No. 22;—(1833) Rue des Petits-Champs, at Fontainebleau;—(1838) At the Grenadière, at Tours;—(1839) Rue Chanoineau, at Tours;—(1840) At Madame Lacroix's, at Fontenay-sous-Bois;—(1840) In a private house, at Fontenay-sous-Bois;—(1841) Rue Vineuse, at Passy;—Rue des Moulins, at Passy;—Avenue Sainte-Marie, at Paris;—(1850) Rue d'Enfer, No. 113, at Madame Mugnier's;—(1853) Avenue Chateaubriand, No. 5; (1855) Rue de Vendôme, No. 5.

Born and brought up in the Rue Montorgueil, at the old No. 50, Béranger removed from there with his mother to the Boulevard du Temple. He was put to school in the Rue des Boulets, in the faubourg Saint-Antoine. On his return from Péronne, he lodged with his father near the Palais-Royal; in 1800 he lived in the Rue Saint-Nicaise, and from thence he went to the Boulevard Saint-Martin, where he found his *garret*. Under the Empire he lodged in the Rue du Port Mahon, No. 12 (1808), and from there went to No. 20, in the Rue de Bellefonds.

lois, and he had, in fact, a niece with whom Béranger was well acquainted, and who was Madame Redouté, also the niece of the flower painter of that name; Judith was her cousin-german. Neither the one nor the other, however, touched the foils of M. Levallois. Mademoiselle Judith was the most amiable and the best brought up. Béranger did not become acquainted with her until 1796, when she was about eighteen, and was with an aunt, a very respectable woman, Mademoiselle Robe, who brought her up, and left her, in 1818, the small remains of a fortune which had been ruined by the Revolution. Although she did not reside under his roof until 1835, it is not too much to say that this friend, who died only three months before him, shared his whole life. She was very handsome, and preserved even in old age the power of singing with purity and grace. She was possessed of great good sense, and was for the poet a most worthy companion. Need we say, that this woman whom he loved all his life with so respectful a tenderness, is not the coquettish and light *Lisette* of his songs? There are only two of his songs in which any record remains engraven of Mademoiselle Judith. These are the *Bonne Vieille*, one of the most tender and moving pieces he has ever written, and the exquisite romance of which the refrain is—

"Grand Dieu, combien elle est jolie!"

The most refined delicacy of sentiment breathes

through every verse; and it is, certainly, a serious mistake to endeavour to make this excellent friend—this high-spirited and devoted woman, the heroine of some frivolous couplets. It is only necessary, it seems to us, to read attentively Béranger's old songs, to avoid falling into such mistakes. The new songs show clearly enough that the *Lisette* mentioned in them was nothing more than an imaginary personage whom Béranger had borrowed from the Eighteenth century.

"Va revoir chaque Lisette
Qui l'a devancé là—bas"

says he in one place. Again, in another place, he says—

"Et la beauté tendre et rieuse
Qui de ces fleurs me couronna jadis,
Vieille, dit-on, elle est pieuse;
Tous nos baisers, les a-t-elle maudits?
J'ai cru que Dieu pour moi l'avait fait naitre;
Mais l'age accourt qui vient tout effacer;
O honte! et sans la reconnaitre,
Je la verrais passer!"

It is impossible to apply these verses which the poet devotes to the memory of his fugitive loves, to the tender friend with whom he lived uninterruptedly at the time when he wrote his last songs. He has never afforded to any one the opportunity of placing any name which he respected on the margin of his book. Mademoiselle Judith continued to the close of her life to delight all with whom she came in contact by the

delicacy of her mind and the severe grace of her language. There came a day when Béranger was compelled to speak of her to the public. The strange idea had occurred to some one of announcing that Béranger had married his servant. Béranger did not express all the indignation he experienced at the rumour, but he made it felt through the irony with which he contradicted the statement.

"Sir,—You have had the kindness to send me the numbers of your journal since the 1st June, but it is by mere chance that I have seen to-day your number published on the 30th of May.

"The public is informed in that number that I have just been married, that I have espoused my servant, and that all Passy has been the happy witness of the nuptials.

"Amongst all the pieces of false information which enrich our journals, I have never yet met with anything which surprised me more than this announcement; but yet, had the article referred only to myself, I should have allowed the news it contains to proceed uncontradicted to Passy, which but little suspects the pleasure which has been procured for it by this marriage *in extremis*.

"But it is necessary that you should know, sir, that the person whom your informant styles my servant, and whose name even he ventures to give, a serious addition to the inconvenience of the publication of such a fable, is one who was the friend of my earliest youth, and a person to whom I am under obligations. Fifty years ago, when she occupied a position much more favourable than my own, she more than once alleviated my poverty by gifts of money. And now, to be still of service to me at a time when we are sixty years of age, she is kind enough to superintend the little household which I am obliged to keep up on account of an infirm female relative whose old age I wish to cherish.

"Old friends as we are, and constantly intimate as we have been, we little suspected that the fact of our hundred and sixteen years being under the same roof, would furnish matter for newspaper slanders; and certainly my old friend herself was far from supposing, strictly modest though she be, that by devoting herself to the task of carrying on my housekeeping with that economy which the circumstances of each of us render so indispensable, she would be taken for a servant—a circumstance which, however, could be no very great wound, either to her democratic sentiments or my own.

"For my own part I never supposed that her name was known to any but our common friends and a few indigent persons. It is because your informant has thought proper to make this name public that I find myself compelled to make known also her to whom it belongs.

"You will consider then, I hope, sir, that the insertion of this letter in your journal will be but an act of justice, and is necessary to nullify the effect of an article which I am sorry not to have seen sooner. As far as the matter affects myself I have no wish to complain; but I consider it my duty to let your readers know that my old friend has always had too much good sense to have ever been willing to be the wife of a poor fool who has placed all his happiness in songs and surrendered his life to the discretion of the journalists.

"Finding, as I do, that so many different anecdotes are invented with respect to me, all of which are about as probable as that of my asserted marriage, I conclude, sir, that their growth is in some degree attributable to myself.

"In spite of my love of retirement, the desire of obliging has been the cause of my receiving too many visitors. I now see that it is necessary to refuse admittance to all but those whom delicacy and good taste prevent from crossing those walls with which, it has been said, the law surrounds a man's private life. I shall henceforth take care to have a bolt on my door, and shall have to thank your *spirituel* contributor for a little additional repose.

"Thank him, then, in my name, sir, and accept, I beg of you, the assurance of my deep regard.

"Your very humble servant,

"*Béranger.*

"Passy, 5th June, 1848."

The circumstances of a household so hospitable and generous as that of Béranger, speedily became embarrassed, and in 1850 he quitted Passy, and took up his abode in a boarding-house which was situated at the top of the *Rue d'Enfer*, near the Luxembourg. Shortly afterwards, he went to live at Beaujon, where he passed his three last years of health and happiness. He still retained the full use of his limbs and his memory, was as gay as ever, and as glad as he had ever been to receive visits from his friends.

Béranger was fond of young people, and was always pleased to see them. His patriotism and faith in the future made him regard them with affection; and they on their side venerated him even more than they admired him.

During more than twenty years, the patronage of youthful intelligence was his most earnest care and sweetest pleasure. If it thrust itself upon his notice bold and ignorant, he did not treat it harshly, but by a thousand ingenious wiles endeavoured to induce it to engage in wise studies, or to forget useless dreams; if it came before him suppliant and showing in its

very prayer for his notice, that it held out hope of future worth, he that moment became its tutor and guide; other poets have thought proper to reward their admirers with ironical exaggerations; but Béranger entertained a far different idea with respect to the duties of his glory. To a man who had resolved from his twentieth year to bear his father's name with credit, he wrote:

"Passy, 6th August, 1834.

"To M. Ernest Legouve.—Do you know, sir, how embarrassing and even dismaying is the confidence with which you desire to honor me? What! you wish me to become the director of your literary life? I must acknowledge that the expression of this wish on your part is a great testimony of esteem for me, and that I am much touched by it; but that, unfortunately, is no sufficient reason why I should accept a Mentorship of this nature. You accuse yourself of having been to see me but seldom. Well, sir! you at the same time explain the cause of my hesitation to respond to the wishes expressed in your letter, amiable as it is.

"How, in fact, is it possible to trace out a rule of life for a man whom one has not had time to study? But, you will say, you have read my various literary exercises! Yes! but is that sufficient? A few productions more or less clever (I am not so severe a critic of your writings as yourself), can make one acquainted with a man's talent only, and afford no insight into his character. Well! and what matter? the young people will reply. And I answer, that in my opinion, it matters much, especially in an age like ours, when a man can only find his *point d'appui* in himself. But setting aside the subject of character, have you no predominant tastes calculated to exercise an influence over your mind? If you have, I am ignorant of them. You have

had the misfortune to be what the world calls a fortunate young man; and from the moment of your birth, the world has smiled upon you. You admit that at the present time, you would be perfectly happy if you were not tormented by an ambition for glory. In what empty coffer, alas! are you endeavouring to find that which, according to you, is necessary to your happiness? However, it is your mania, and it would be vain to attempt to cure you of it. When Fortune refuses us nothing, she ever bestows upon us one gift too much. Ah! well, my poor child, hunt after glory. It is a mirage which rises up before your eyes, from the depths of deserts; take care that it does not tempt you into them. There is only one way by which you can escape this misfortune. Employ yourself in being useful. That we should be so, is a law imposed by God upon us all, and in literature it is more than ever an obligation. Do not be one of those who are contented with the literary art for its own sake. Endeavour to find out whether there do not exist in you some belief, with respect either to your country or your fellow-men, to which you may direct your efforts and your thoughts. Possessed, as you are, of a noble and good heart and a generous mind, it is scarcely possible that society which has been unable to corrupt you by its caresses, should not have left you still endowed with some feelings of affection for your kind.

"Well; consult those feelings and they will be a surer guide for you in your studies and your labours than all that the most learned of men could tell you. Such feelings have had the power to make something of a pitiful wretch like me—something which is not of much account, I dare say, but still something.

"I am speaking to you in a language, sir, which will, doubtless, astonish you; for it is little in accordance with that which your world has accustomed you to hear. But be quite satisfied that I am giving you the true explanation of all my principles of conduct since I attained the age of

reason; an age which I reached somewhat early, because when I was fifteen years old I was compelled to be a man and to conduct my own education. To those who may be willing to oppose the example of a great poet to that of a poor song-writer, and who may tell you that Byron had no faith, I will reply that Byron, representing a falling and decaying aristocracy could not have any but negative beliefs; but they are still beliefs, and certainly these of Byron were as strong in this way as his genius was grand. Believing the aristocracy to be the flower of the Universe, and seeing it to be stained with vices, he has been led to curse the whole and to plunge into that misanthropy, sometimes fierce and sometimes ironical, which has been so ridiculously aped amongst ourselves. But what was this misanthropy of his? A love deceived!

Your age is the age of happy loves; your heart is young. Do not employ it solely about yourself. Extend the circle of your investigations; and distrust, above all things, that fictitious world in which fortune has placed you. Your mind, your soul will speedily find food for these meditations, and the direction in which you ought to throw their energies will become manifest at the moment when you least expect it. Nature has appointed a fit employment for all the faculties she bestows on us; we have but to seek what it is. As you are capable of learning, learn; as you are able to enjoy repose, indulge in meditation; but above all things employ your thoughts about others than yourself. I am quite aware that all this babbling will appear to you very vague and, perhaps, even ridiculous. There is no objection to your thinking so, but as you have asked my advice, I have imparted to you my own secret; I could not have behaved more fairly towards you; I have given you confidence for confidence. I trust that you will see in this letter some proof of my friendship and consideration. Believe, I pray you, that I entertain those sentiments in all sincerity, and command me as often as I can serve you; it can never be too often.

"Most truly yours,

"*Béranger.*"

It was after he had left Beaujon that Béranger's health began to fail. His last dwelling-place was in the Rue de Vendôme. Fresh pecuniary losses and bodily sickness compelled him to give up the little réunions which he so much enjoyed; he became still worse, and found himself, with real grief, obliged to renounce also his daily walks.

This was the moment in which inconsiderate men thought proper to calumniate, in a foreign journal, the man who was already in the grasp of death; accusing him of being secretly in receipt of a pension from the Court.

To this calumny, Perrotin replied by the following unanswerable letter:

"Mr. Editor,

"One of the foreign journals* which fill their columns with all sorts of rumours collected from—it is impossible to say where—has attacked our poet Béranger, in its number of the 5th of January, 1857, by reproaching him with receiving secretly, and as though he were committing a bad action, a pension from a certain august personage.

"Even had my name not been mentioned in this miserable paragraph, which is so unworthy of any respectable paper, I should still have the right to reply to it in Béranger's name. If he do not deign to rebut calumny, he cannot prevent his friends from doing so in his name.

"Let me inform you, then, of the simple fact, from whence has arisen this grossly false and malicious report.

"Last year the Empress, feeling anxious with respect to

* The *Journal des Bruxelles*.

Béranger's health and fortunes, had a proposal made to me through a confidential person (the Secretary *de ses Commandements*), under promise of the strictest secrecy, that a sum, of which I was to fix the amount, should be yearly placed in my hands, that I might offer it to Béranger in my own name. Certainly, the proposition was one worthy of a noble heart, but I could not consider that I had the right to accept it. Beranger alone had this right, and when I had obtained permission to inform him of the proposal which had been made to me, he entirely approved of the course I had pursued, saying that he did not see how I could have acted otherwise. He did more; for he wrote me a letter in which he expressed in the most admirable terms his sense of the kindness shown to him; adding that he had never been richer than he was at that time—that he had never had need of any larger fortune—and that the fact of his declining to accept the favours offered to him, was only a reason for his regarding their offer with the more gratitude.

"You are now acquainted, sir, with the precise details of the transaction alluded to, and you will share the indignation which has been excited in my breast, by the anonymous censor, who, whilst affecting to treat Béranger with affectionate familiarity, has reproached him with having stretched out his hand for alms; and who completes his lie by saying to him; '*Sois cousu d'or.*'

"It has appeared to me, that our honour demands, that an explanation should be given with respect to the circumstances which have been the occasion of these calumnies, and that you would not be unwilling to have still another opportunity of honouring a man whose disinterestedness has never been equalled but by his charity.

"Accept the best respects of your devoted servant,

"*Perrotin.*"

"Publisher of Béranger's Songs.

"14th January, 1857."

"Paris, ——."

Béranger's disease now assumed a more serious phase; his memory sometimes failed him; and M. Charles Bernard, his devoted medical attendant, the son of his old friend, M. Joseph Bernard, already began to study his countenance with anxiety. M. Trousseau, who was called in to remove, if possible, the unknown malady under which the poet was sinking, declared that it could not be removed, and that it was water on the heart, complicated by a liver complaint. At the same time he promised to make the utmost exertions to keep the complaint at bay, and he kept his promise. In the midst of the most incessant labours, he always found time to visit and tend the sick man, the approach of whose death he had pronounced to be so certain; and, during the last days of his life, visited him twice a day.

Béranger continued to drag out his existence only by a species of miracle, and at the beginning of the winter of 1856, his friends had great fears that they were about to lose him. His excellent constitution still enabled him to bear up, however, and sometimes he even regained his wonted liveliness. His spirit of generosity never abandoned him; and when confined to the house, and almost bedridden, his only grief was that he could not carry out such and such kind intentions; and he would write, whilst his hand could scarcely guide the pen, to obtain assistance for his friends and protégés.

Mademoiselle Judith, who had been in good health up to the close of the year 1856, became suddenly seriously ill, being afflicted by a cancer in the stomach. She soon became unable to take any kind of nourishment; but her air of resignation and the gentleness of her voice proved at this very time how serenely steadfast was her spirit. On the 8th April, 1857, she died, almost without pain, and with almost unexampled courage and calmness. She gave sufficient evidence, on her death-bed, of her worthiness to be the life-long companion of her friend; and her name deserves to be inscribed beside that of Béranger himself.

She was about two years older than the poet; but there had been reason to suppose that she would have survived him, and he had made her his heir.

Funeral scenes now gather round us, and everything speaks of the death of the illustrious poet.

In the year 1844, he had appointed M. Perrotin his executor.

"After mature reflection and notwithstanding the interest which M. Perrotin will have in my property after my decease, in accordance with the terms of agreements which I have entered into with him, I am so convinced of his high sense of honour and his unbounded devotion, that I appoint the said M. Perrotin executor of my will.

"Done at Passy, June 7th, 1844,

"*Pierre Jean de Béranger.*"

Three years later, he sent to M. Perrotin the copy of his will, and accompanied it by the following letter:—

"To Monsieur Perrotin,—I send you herewith, my dear Perrotin, the copy of my will, together with a codicil to it, in which I appoint you my executor. I authorize you, immediately after my decease, to open it, and to carry out its directions in behalf of Judith, whom I have left my sole legatee; and also, in behalf of your own interests, to take possession of my papers and draughts of songs, the MS. books which I shall not have already forwarded to you, the preface for the posthumous volume, and my Biography, which will be in the large drawer of my *secrétaire*.

"Many letters which I have not yet burned will be found amongst my papers, and these of course must be destroyed; unless there should be any imperious necessity to the contrary. Above all things take care that none fall into the hands of autograph-collectors. As for those which I have tied up in parcels, and which are in my *secrétaire*, it will probably be advisable to burn them also, but they should be first carefully examined to make sure that they are of no further use. Should you come upon any old manuscript compositions of mine, whether in prose or verse, let none of them be published, I entreat you: my songs are quite enough, and the publication of other productions from my pen would probably only injure them. There is a manuscript of mine in the hands of M. F , which I gave him on condition that it should not be published; and the subject of which is "Fontaine's Fables." I hereby continue the prohibition against its publication, to which M. F—— has promised to submit.

"I must now speak of the publication of the volume which I leave behind me—the songs of my old age. I should tell you which of my friends you should consult with respect to the value of those songs, and the corrections they may require, if I did not know, as I do, that you are well aware which of

my friends you ought to communicate with on this matter. But let me beg of you, above all things, to take care that your printer has my verses seen through the press by a careful reader, and by one who knows, at least, how a verse should rhyme.

"I am especially anxious that immediately after my death, you should persuade Judith to make her will, for the sake of those of our friends whom she will doubtless be desirous of benefiting, and whose interests I should myself take care of, should I die after her. For her to indulge in tears, instead of fulfilling my intentions in this matter, would be simply to show a disregard for my memory.

"With respect to my funeral, I have to entreat you, my dear Perrotin, to avoid, if possible, making it the object of public attention. In the case of the friends whom I have myself lost, I have always felt a great horror of the attendance of crowds, and the delivery of orations at their funerals; and if my own could be conducted quite privately, the fact would be the fulfilment of one of my wishes. Annexed to my will, in my own possession, in the form of a codicil, is a paper in which I declare my satisfaction with the terms of the bargain made between us; and this formal approbation, although quite unnecessary, contains a complete account of the rights you possess with respect to my manuscripts, and may at some time or other be of use.

"It remains for me to recommend to your care Antier, the oldest of my friends, and one whose old age may, probably, be far from prosperous. Take care, I beseech you, that he does not want, and if the Biography which I am leaving behind me should obtain some small success, and he should lose his employment, secure a pension to him. Judith might do something for his eldest daughter, and thus help both of them.

"This is about all that I have to say to you on the occasion of my sending you a copy of my will, with the codicil annexed to it, both of which are of somewhat old date.

"As it is said that the cholera is likely to return, I have thought it as well to re-consider the terms of my will; but

I have found nothing to alter in them. At the same time, however, I have determined to carry into execution an idea I have long entertained, and to place in your hands the duplicates of those papers which you will require to enable you to fulfil your duties, as executor of my will. I accordingly now transmit them to you, and have too much faith in your friendship to think it necessary to offer any apologies for the trouble I may thus cause you.

"Entirely yours,

"*Béranger.*

"Paris, 14th November, 1847."

It may be desirable, perhaps, to take note of the recommendations which Béranger made to his publisher with respect to his posthumous songs.

In 1851 Béranger added to his first will a codicil, in which he made a formal demand that his obsequies should be conducted with all simplicity and in such a manner as to avoid giving cause for any excitement around his tomb.

"When the moment of my death shall have come, I beg that two of my friends who shall be present at my decease will prevent any means being taken for preserving my remains. I beg them, also, to have me interred in the simplest possible manner, in the nearest cemetery. Further, I express it as my distinct wish that they should not give any intimation of my death to the public journals, until after my burial. I also express it as my wish," he added, "or even command, if I may employ such a word, that all the letters which may be found in the drawers of my *secrétaire*, *de commode*, or in any other corner of my lodging, may be burnt at my death; exception being made only with respect to those which may refer to my own private affairs."

This codicil is dated the 1st March, 1851. After the death of Mademoiselle Judith, Béranger wrote a second will with a hand which was already trembling.

"Paris, 18th May, 1857.

"This is my will.

"I appoint and nominate by these presents M. Perrotin (Charles Aristide) my sole legatee, and give him accordingly all the property of which I shall die possessed.*

"*P. de Béranger.*"

These sad words having been written, he awaited the approaching hour. On the occasion of Mademoiselle Judith's funeral, he was anxious to follow her remains to the tomb. Supporting himself with difficulty on the arm of a friend, he could only go as far as the church, from whence he returned to his now lonely lodging, with his great heart overwhelmed with grief. The devoted attention and consolations of his friends soothed him to apparent resignation, and strengthened him still to support his wounded and shattered life; but sickness and sorrow were to allow his life to continue but for a few more short, sad days.

He began to fall into a state of torpor, which was

* The little fortune which Béranger left behind him has been divided, by the sole legatee, amongst the persons with whom Béranger himself shared it. The pensions which some poor old persons calculated upon receiving each month have been secured to them; and the price of the furniture of the chamber in which the poet died, the dispersion of which would have been too cruel, has been given to the Commune de Châtillon.

very distressing to those about him. Frequently, in the middle of a conversation he would suddenly forget the subject on which he was speaking and fix the whole attention of that mind which never forgot anything, upon invisible images. Sometimes, again, he would break free from those inward contemplations, and arouse himself to address his companions with the gentlest words. From the time these symptoms appeared, the anxiety of his friends was constantly on the alert. It was necessary that a private physician, M. Jabin, should devote his constant attention to the sick poet, and it was also thought advisable to have recourse to the special experience of M. Brouillard, who called once or twice, and confirmed the opinion which M. Trousseau had already formed on the case.

Towards the end of June the extreme heat of the weather hastened the crisis of the poet's malady. His bright intellect had already at moments been clouded —his vigorous spirit had become enfeebled, and his keen eyes become dim. The public anxiety was unbounded when the journals announced the state of danger in which he lay.

His old friends, his new friends, his intimate friends, his unknown friends, the whole of Paris, in short, hastened to the Rue de Vendôme. From the earliest dawn crowds hastened to consult the bulletins of his health, and the least adverse sign in them caused universal grief.

MM. Lamartine, Odillon Barrot, Barthélemy, Saint Hilaire, visited Béranger; and his older friends MM. Thiers, Mignet, Lebrun, and Cousin, went to see him almost every day. They had been bound with him in the ties of friendship for many long years.

When he saw his old friends around him, Béranger's spirit shook off its torpor, and his malady lost its bitterness, and he conversed with them with tenderness and enjoyment. One day when he was speaking with modest distrust respecting his poems, M. Thiers said to him, "Do you know, Béranger, I call you the French Horace." "What would the other say?" replied he, with a smile. On another occasion, he spoke of God and the future with wondrous words and an inspired voice.

But these moments when his intellect resumed its vigour were very rare.

Béranger's sister, who was a cloistered nun, had only seen him once since she had taken the vows. She now came to see him, being authorized to do so by the Archbishop, and accompanied by another *religieuse*. She entered his bed-room, embraced him, and received his embrace, and then retired, and could not return. But she expressed the gratitude she felt towards her brother's friends, and sent every day to enquire after him. M. the Abbé Jousselin, formerly curate of Passy, and now curate of Sainte-Elisabeth, had found

Béranger once more in his parish. Their conversation had still been about their poor friends. When Béranger's illness appeared to be drawing near its close, he was visited by M. le Curé. Their conversations were few, brief, and unimportant; but there is one of them, the last, which has been reported in the most various forms. At the moment when the Abbé Jousselin was about to withdraw, Béranger said to him in a clear voice, "Your character gives you the right to bless me. And I, on my part, bless you. Pray for me, and for all unfortunates! My life has been that of a honest man. I remember no action for which I have cause to blush before God."

On the 28th June, it was supposed that Béranger must die in the course of the day, the excessive heat so aggravated his sufferings. But the weather became cooler, and he still survived some days.

Many ladies, when his disease was at its height, claimed the privilege of their old friendship, and envied Madame Antier the fatigues of her admirable and constant devotion during the long days and longer nights.

* The following are the names of the persons who watched by Béranger's side during his last illness:—

M. and Madame Antier, and M. Perrotin, every day; Doctors Charles Bernard, Jabin, Charles Lasègue, M. M. Edmond Arnould, Paul Boiteau, Victor Bonnet, Onesime Borgnon, Broc, Chevallon, Donneau, Gallet, Savinien Lapointe, Charles Thomas.

On the 15th July, towards noon, Béranger found himself a little better, and recognizing his friends, addressed a few words to them. With a gleam of his wonted gentle gaiety, he smiled when M. Jegaeas feeling his pulse, spoke to him of the crowd around his house—the crowd which was never weary of besieging the staircase, and which withdrew with so much unwillingness. The sun was at its highest point in the heavens, and threw a brilliant glow upon the windows. As Goethe, on his death bed, so poor Béranger signed that the windows should be opened, and sought the light with an eager glance. He could not believe himself mortally ill; he murmured "*A month, a month and a half,*" when the doctor told him that he must patiently await a cure, which was now, alas! impossible.

There is one name which we might have expected to find in this list which is wanting to it, that of Béjot; who was confined to his bed by a painful complaint which only left him after Béranger's death.

Among other old friends, M. M. Cauchois-Lemaire, Bernard de Rennes and Joseph Bernard, may be mentioned as having been unwilling to leave even for a moment the side of the illustrious friend whose dying hours they watched.

* From the time that Béranger lived in the Rue Vendome, M. Ségalas always offered his services whenever he had need of medical advice. He had already attended Béranger through a hémorrhage; and he watched by him during the last days of his life with the utmost zeal.

In the morning M. Mignet had found him sleeping heavily, his head resting on a pallet attached to his elbow chair. Some moments after, Manin entered; but Béranger, who awoke in a state of stupor, neither recognised nor addressed him—at which Manin wept.

The night was melancholy. Doctor Lesigue, one of his friends, watched the sick man. On the 16th, from early morning, the heat was very great. The air was heavy with storm. Through the court yard, which was filled with persons, a sad presentiment had already spread; and on all faces was expressed the fact that the public sorrow was no longer consoled by even a shadow of hope. Dr. Trousseau announced that the pulse was failing, and that the last hour was not far distant. At the top of the staircase, subdued voices breathed in scarcely audible whispers. The wind wailed through the corridors, and the open doors and closed shutters trembled in the shade. There were in Béranger's chamber but his intimate friends, M. and Madame Antier, M. Perrotin, M. Vernet (who had arrived the same morning), Madame Vernet, M. Thomas, (the Paymaster-General of the Minister of Finance), M. Lebrun (of the French Academy), M. Paul Boiteau (the youngest of his friends) and two servants. They awaited the bursting of the storm and the approach of death.

Seated in his great arm-chair, in the midst of his chamber, his back turned to the windows, his head inclined to the right, Béranger sank under the grasp of death; his limbs, covered with drapery, struggled with the pain which afflicted them; his respiration was choked; his lips, half closed, only gave utterance to empty words; his forehead was covered with a dreadful sweat; his hands trembled with involuntary movements; and his dulled eyes, struggling against the night which had suddenly fallen upon them, seemed to wander restlessly about in search of his old friends. At the same time there was not even a trace of complaining upon the countenance which had so long been animated with the highest intelligence.

The thunder echoed; the rain fell in floods; the lightning, darting across the lofty trees in the garden, threw its glare into the silent chamber. Béranger began to breathe with a little less difficulty. The sign of the cross which one of his nurses, kneeling before him, made at each thunder-clap, caused him no astonishment. He appeared as though he were unconscious of the storm, and supporting his head upon his right hand, vaguely gazed on those around him.

The refreshed air had the effect of giving him an appearance of recovered strength, which sadly soothed the despair of the friends by whom he was surrounded—for he was to die before sunset!

From time to time he bestowed upon his friends

fond and gentle glances. They gave him drink, and placed a morsel of ice, his last food, upon his lips; once again they placed his hand on the platinum snuff box, of which he was so fond, and once more his fingers assumed the wonted gesture. But those glances and those gestures were but blind, involuntary motions. His friends then embraced him, and holding his hand, his too inert hand, wept behind his chair; and still in spite of themselves they could not but forget the dying man in the contemplation of his living glory.

Towards two o'clock Béranger was attacked by spasms of severe bodily pain. He suffered much before he died. M. Lebrun, overcome by his grief, retired into a neighbouring chamber. A few moments before MM. Mignet, Thiers, and Cousin, had seen their friend for the last time. At thirty-five minutes past four, Béranger died in the arms of his friends, pressing M. Antier's hand. One of his physicians counted the last beatings of his pulse. The pulse stopped. All was over!

An extraordinary sadness spread throughout Paris at the close of the evening, and seemed to foretell some solemn manifestation of feeling on the morrow.

A few hours after Béranger's decease, the Minister of State informed his friends that the Government, desirous of bestowing upon the poet a public mark of respect, would itself conduct his obsequies. The

State took upon itself the place of the absent relations, and the executor had no longer any duties to fulfil. He transmitted to the minister a copy of the letter in which Béranger, expressing his last wishes, desired that his obsequies should resemble in their simplicity the habits of his life. The Government immediately took its measures, and armed by this the poet's expressed wish, had the following notice posted up throughout the city that same night:—

"OBSEQUIES OF BERANGER.

"France has lost her national poet.

"The Emperor has been anxious that public honours should be bestowed upon Béranger's memory; this pious homage being due to the poet whose songs, consecrated to patriotism, have aided to perpetuate in the heart of the people the memory of the Imperial glory.

"I have learned that the members of a particular faction regard this sad solemnity only as an opportunity of renewing the disorders which, at other times, have characterized similar ceremonies.

"The Government will not permit a tumultuous demonstration to take the place of that respectful and patriotic expression of sorrow which ought to attend the burial of Béranger.

"Moreover, the will of the deceased has been expressed in these touching words:—

"'With regard to my funeral, I have to entreat you to avoid, if possible, making it the object of public attention. In the case of the friends whom I have myself lost, I have always felt a great horror of the attendance of crowds, and the delivery of orations at their funerals.'

"It has been resolved, then, with the sanction of the

testamentary executor, that the funeral *cortége* shall be exclusively composed of official deputations and persons specially invited to it by letter.

"I call upon the people to conform to these orders. Measures have been taken to secure the observance of perfect and religious respect for the will of the Government and that of the deceased.

"The Senator, Prefect of Police,

"*Pietri.*"

Whilst preparations were being made for his funeral, the poet's friends watched beside his mortal remains. At half-past eleven in the evening, M. Perrotin obtained the necessary authorization to take a cast of Béranger's features. His body had been placed on the bed—death had removed all the outward signs of disease, and had calmed and ennobled the countenance.*

On the morning of the following day Béranger's friends buried him.†

* A talented sculptor has been directed by M. Perrotin to make a memorial-bust of Béranger, which shall be both exact and authentic, No one but this gentleman was admitted on that last evening to take a copy of the poet's features, and none of the likenesses, whether engravings or photographs which have been hitherto published, have the slightest resemblance to the reality.

† Procès-Verbal *of the death and burial of Béranger.*

"On the 16th of July, 1857, at thirty-five minutes past four in the afternoon, after a short but excessive agony, Béranger breathed his last sigh.

"The Government, immediately informed of this sad event, determined, as is known, that the burial should take place

The streets were crowded on the occasion. An army was drawn up along the road, and a whole population was present as spectators. The public grief, surprised as it had been by the rapidity of the ceremony, was but the more profound. The mass of the people, the whole nation, comprehended that they had lost their dearest friend, their purest glory.

From the first steps taken by the funeral cortége from the house of death, it was apparent how great a day was to be this day of mourning. From the middle of the Rue Vendôme, the heights of the Rue Meslay resembled a circus completely filled with spectators. Every head was uncovered. A throng

at noon on the following day, and under the direction of the State.

"All the necessary measures had to be taken with the greatest rapidity; and that very evening at nine o'clock, the Medical Inspector examined the corpse.

"On the 17th July, at half-past nine in the morning. MM. Perrotin and Antier, and Dr. Charles Bernard, being assembled, Dr. Charles Bernard, in concert with Doctors Trousseau and Jabin, convinced himself once more of the fact of a death which was sufficiently indicated by all the usual signs. MM. Perrotin and Antier, and Dr. Charles Bernard, proceeded alone to the burial and entombing of their old friend, P. J. de Béranger.

"Done at Paris, 5, Rue de Vendôme, the 17th July 1857, at ten o'clock in the morning.

"(Signed)

"Perrotin, Antier, and Charles Bernard."

of recollections imposed silence upon all. No picture could represent the moving scenes of these obsequies: the swarms of men, women, and children which surged on to pay their homage to the funeral car, and which a long line of soldiers could scarcely keep upon the boulevard. Posts, balconies, roofs, were all covered by a sighing and sorrowing crowd. Cries of '*Honour! honour to Béranger!*' (What a funeral oration!) would be succeeded by profound silence. Expressions of respect and admiration burst forth by turns with constant unanimity. The finest scene of the day was when the cortége was slowly passing along the banks of the canal Saint Martin. An entire population covered the whole of the space which the eye could take in. The houses and streets had been insufficient to contain it. The boats on the canal trembled beneath the weight of the innumerable crowd which on each side was arranged *en amphithéâtre*, and in which throbbed so many beating hearts.

Fear appears to have been entertained of some great tumult; but Paris religiously respected the obsequies of its illustrious poet and dearest child.

For his epitaph, we need but engrave upon his tomb, the following verses which he has himself written for us.

"The tempests which have wrecked our lives
For you shall be the winds of Fame,

The lightning which destroys, revives
Faint nature with its flame.
It is for your sakes God has brought
Such sorrow in our days."

These verses will bear witness to the sufferings, the efforts, the genius of our ancestors, and will support our hopes. They will tell posterity, in the morning of what disastrous days was born. the singer whom to-day we weep, and upon what visions of a glad future he ever bent his gaze.

NOTES.

I.

BÉRANGER resembled but very slightly the greater number of the portraits which have pretended to represent him. We have prefixed to this volume an etching of a drawing by Charlet, which was made in 1834, and is a very truthful sketch. A bas-relief, which has been modelled after this design, has been very well received, under the supposition that it was copied from the life; but it has, really, no historical value.

It appears as though writers have endeavoured to be less truthful in their descriptions of Béranger than the artists in their representations of his appearance; and if we were to judge by certain recent sketches, we should be very much deceived with respect to Béranger's private life and habits. He had none of the characteristics, as has been asserted, of the man who desired to live in too strict a retirement; nor had he anything of the rustic in his appearance beyond that indescribable air of frankness which beamed from his countenance, and which Chateaubriand has praised

His stature, which was perfectly proportioned, was

about five feet one inch in height, but his head increased it by a cubit; and it was on this head alone that all looks were fastened. It was strongly framed, and altogether of an extraordinary structure; the bony boss of the brain being of singular size,* and bulging forward as though it contained with difficulty a too active thought. In his twenty-third year Béranger had become bald, and had acquired by that circumstance the air—which makes youth appear so calm, and old age so venerable—of a man whom life has wearied, of a patriarch who is reposing after his struggles. At the same time, the few locks which still remained, and which were of a blonde colour, scarcely blanched, being suffered to grow and fall upon his shoulders, framed his gentle countenance in a manner which could not fail to please.

Firmness of character was evident in every trait of his countenance; but it also gave equal evidence of sweetness of disposition. His great blue eyes, projecting somewhat from their orbits, had an expression which none who had ever seen it could forget. Towards the close of his life they were veiled and obscured; but even when their powers of sight were diminished, their glance retained its serenity; and when his lips were mute, they still spoke the language of goodness. As a lofty thought shot across his soul

* Circumference 0m. 59; greatest length, 0m. 21.

a brilliant gleam illumined them, and the fire of indignation could inflame them. The outline of his mouth was especially remarkable ; and its arched lips as readily opened with the smile of benevolence as with the smile of irony. Ever flowed from them, thrilling and harmonious, gentle words. Yet his voice, which was almost always agreeable and sweet, could give utterance, if need were, to the tones of severity. During his latter days every one who heard him speak, remarked his prophetic accent. It still echoes in our ears.

Long sickly, Béranger had been in his youth very delicate, even pitifully so, and, as he has himself said, subject to very frequent and cruel headaches, from which he became partly free as he became older. His air, which was voluptuous and punctilious, and very graceful, was not without a tinge of melancholy. It was never negligent: it was simple. His hand was small, supple, and finely formed. He was a great walker, and his step was at once firm and light. Almost all his songs were composed during his walks.

His dress was that of a Protestant clergyman. His clothes, which were all of simple cut and of a dark colour, and his large hat of soft felt, suited him precisely. He kept to old fashions, and tied his cravat round a great, raised shirt-collar, as he had done in his youth. But there was no affec-

tation in the simplicity of his costume. His only object in adhering to it was to obtain perfect ease.

II.

Béranger has inserted in his Biography some of the songs of his youth. We should have been able, by searching the literary collections of the period of the Empire, to discover some other songs and *morceaux*, which then appeared, and which would have formed a curious collection; but we have thought it necessary to cite here only those which are of especial interest.

The Idyl of Glycère, which is very short, is very characteristic of what was Béranger's first style. It appeared in 1805, in the *Saisons du Parnasse*, and in the *Almanach des Muses*. Mademoiselle Pauline de Meulan (who afterwards became Madame Guizot) was the first to call attention, in the *Publiciste*, to the grace and natural manner of these verses.

GLYCÈRE.

IDYL.

AN OLD BODY—
Tell me, thou little laughing maid,
What seek you in this gloomy shade?

A YOUNG GIRL—
I come, good sir, for blossoms sweet
To wreathe among my hair,
For all the folk this morning meet,—
For 'tis the village fair!

And there's the fiddle! don't you hear its droon?
Oh! there'll be dancing in the meadow soon!
Glycère is there of course, to-day;—
The belle, if you'll believe them!
But see, now, don't these blossoms say
That I'll soon undeceive them!

THE OLD BODY—
Maiden, maiden! know you not,
Where you are in this dull spot?

THE YOUNG GIRL—
Of course! And yet, since last I came,
It isn't quite, I think, the same!

THE OLD BODY—
Maiden, maiden! here lies low
She who was the village belle;
Above your rival's death-bed grow,
The flowers which grace your locks so well!

To the same year (1805) must be referred the following couplets, which appeared in that year in the *Almanach Litteraire.* They were written as the preface of a volume of songs which Béranger appears to have wished to publish at this time, and which was eventually published in 1815.

Mes amis, accueillez ce livre;
Au triste oubli ma muse y livre
Ses joyeux sons.
Des siècles bravons la mémoire;
De la vôtre j'attends la gloire
Des mes chansons.

Rappelez-vous qu'elles sont nées
Au sein des heures fortunées
Que nous passons;

Soit de jeunesse ou de folie,
Un souvenir toujours se lie
A des chansons.

Qu'aux lieux où régne l'étiquette
On dédaigne la chansonnette:
Nargue aux façons.
Chantons, et dans son vol rapide
Que du temps le front se déride
A nos chansons.

La vie est une longue enfance;
Nous sommes tous de l'espérance
Les nourrissons:
Pleurons-nous berce un hochet frivol
Elle nous berce et nous console.
Par des chansons.

Pour nous que l'amitié rassemble,
Nous devons de chanter ensemble
A ses leçons;
Chant d'amour, de peine ou d'ivresse.
Sa douce voix s'unit sans cesse
A nos chansons.

Avant vous s'il faut que je meure,
Séparés au plus pour une heure,
Point d'oraisons;
Dansez tous en rond sur ma cendre,
Amis, et ne faites entendre.
Que des chansons.

Béranger has himself quoted in his biography three verses of *The Meditation*, which he read to Lucien Bonaparte, and in this elegy, written about 1802, we find the following beautiful passage:—

Nor greatness, nor its dreams, nor high emprise,
Are in the power of human hearts alone;

God rules all destinies—then ne'er despise
A low estate, nor glory in a throne.
Eight centuries ago to rule the world
God raised a family of lordly men;
And now his arm with sudden stroke has hurled
Its princes to inglorious lives again.
Some have been slain, and some about the Earth
Wander like pilgrims whom no shrine can claim,
In all lands finding only empty dearth,
Repulse from every heart, and constant shame.

At length, regardless of this ruin vast,
A man arose whose brilliant actions seemed
To tell the world that in the distant past
Its heart of his high destiny had dreamed.
He fought, he conquered, bound in chains, relieved;
And all he wished, his glorious arms achieved—
Whilst still his aims were scarcely half surmised,
His iron grasp astonished realms comprised;
And now his arm, tired out with deeds of Fame,
Supports a world that glories in his name.
Thus will'd high Heaven, and who that mortal be
Can venture to oppose its firm decree?
When such there are, 'neath Fate's grim chariot thrust,
They soon bleed out their life-blood in the dust.

Amidst the tombs, with blackest midnight fraught,
Thus speaks my heart by their stern silence taught.
Here come the children to rejoin their sires,
Here lately brought and here no longer found,—
I murmured, as the day star's earliest fires
Awoke to song the solitudes around.
Day after day, from his eternal dome
The sun beholds fresh families arise,
Who make of each old palace a new home,
And still in turn each new-born ruler dies!
From human ashes human races grow
In long succession underneath the sun,
Whose rays like grim funereal torches glow
Above this human sepulchre below;

And as each People, when its course is run,
Fades out before him, so shall he in turn,
Weary of gazing on continuous woe,
Before its Maker its last moment burn.

M. Sainte-Beuve has highly praised some other pieces which Béranger wrote about 1833, and which then came under his notice. Of these we may mention an idyllic poem in four parts, entitled *A Pilgrimage* and *The Courtesan;* which latter poem, consisting of about a hundred and thirty verses, expresses, says M. Sainte-Beuve, with feeling, naïveté and elegance, the remorse and tears of a ruined village girl, who revisits for a moment her native fields, and beholds afar off the smoke rising from her mother's roof. And this poem, *The Courtesan,* we might safely give without changing a verse, and it would not disgrace its younger sisters of high renown

We will here present to the reader a curious couplet which we transcribe with great pleasure, not on account of its literary value, but because it was written in 1795.

It was at Peronne, when he was fifteen years of age, that Béranger wrote these verses, and on the following occasion. The young girls of the village were to give to the young men, on Saint Nicolas day, a little fête, in return for one which had been given them on that of Saint-Catherine. A female cousin of Béranger's, of about the same age

as himself, entrusted him to compose some verses on the occasion, and he wrote the following:—

AIR: *Avec le jeu dans le village.*

"Gentles all! we bring to-day,
Instead of common flowers,
The virtues in a neat bouquet,
And compliments in showers.
Old custom bids us friendship grant,
To-day, and we'll not break it;
But if there's something more you want,
You'd better come and take it!"

These verses were sung and applauded. "Well! *Félicite*," asked Béranger of his cousin on the following morning, "did you sing them?" "Yes! and your friends praised them!" "And when you had sung them?" "They made us sing them again!" "And did they ask nothing but that?" "No! what could they ask?" And Béranger did not fail to laugh at the young men of Peronne who had not known how to take a kiss offered so graciously.

These verses, written at fifteen years of age in the work room of the printer Laisnez, were, there is little doubt, Béranger's first composition.

THE END.

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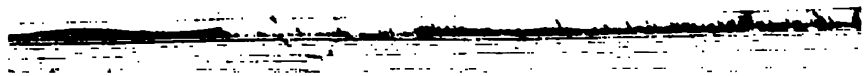
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